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THE
GREAT CONCERN
OF
SALVATION.

BY THE
REV. THOMAS HALYBURTON.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Great Concern of Salvation was not prepared for the press by its lamented author. It was originally prepared as a series of discourses to the people of Ceres parish, of which he was then minister. The former editions of the work are in the form in which it was first written, and in which it was left by the author at his decease. The present edition is re-written and abridged, for the Presbyterian Board of Publication. It is also divided into sections and chapters, and freed from many of the numerical subdivisions of former editions. The Scotticisms and obsolete words of the original are none of them retained ; and some paragraphs which were either of a local nature or not important to the main design of the work, and many repetitions which, though important in delivering a series of discourses, are unnecessary

in a printed book, are wholly omitted. It has been the design to give the principal thoughts and reasonings of the original, in as concise a form as the nature and object of the work would permit. Of the character of the author, and the excellence of his writings, it is not important here to speak ; they have long been known to the Christian public. The writer will only add, that, however imperfectly he may have abridged the "Great Concern of Salvation," the advantages derived from it are a rich reward for all his labour. To no book, except the Bible, has he been more indebted than to this

CHARLES C. CORSS.

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PART I.

A DISCOVERY OF MAN'S NATURAL STATE; OR, THE GUILTY SINNER CONVICTED.

Rev. iii. 22.—All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

CHAPTER I.

EXPLICATION OF THE SUBJECT.

SECTION I. *Preliminary Remarks.*—The great concern of man is suggested by three important inquiries; What have I done? What shall I do to be saved? What shall I render to the Lord? To the question, What have we done? the Bible answers, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” If it be asked, What shall we do to be saved? the answer is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” And if it be asked, “What shall we render to the Lord for all his mercies?” we may reply in the words of the Psalmist, “I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord;” or in the language of the prophet, “He hath showed thee,

O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Ministers of the Gospel are principally concerned with the second inquiry. They are to persuade men to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. But as they come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, the foundation must be laid in a correct view of man's natural state. Before we offer Christ, we must show your need of him; before we present the offers of mercy, we must describe your misery; before we call you to repentance, we must show your guilt. On this account your attention is now invited to the words of the apostle, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." This passage contains a general assertion, in which all stand convicted of sin. All, rich and poor, high and low, Jew and Gentile, have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. It is not asserted, that they *may* sin; and if tempted, *may* fall; but that they are already involved in guilt. The original word rendered *come short*, is emphatical; it properly signifies to fall short of the mark aimed at, or to fall behind in a race, so as to lose the prize. Man, in his first state, had a fair prospect for glory. He had power to run

the race ; and the enemy had no ability to prevent his winning the prize. But though man had originally no encumbrances to retard his progress, yet he fell short of the glory of God. He lost the peculiar enjoyment of the Divine favour, of which he had so fair a prospect ; and the image of God, which was his glory, together with the advantages by which it was to be attended.

The text of Scripture, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," expresses the sentiment, *That all, who have descended from Adam in the ordinary way, have sinned, and thereby come short of the glory of God.* A few propositions will prepare the way for a consideration of this momentous truth.

First. God is the absolute and independent sovereign of the world. "The Lord Most High is terrible ; he is a great king over all the earth," and he alone is able to manage the affairs of so great a province ; for there is none like him, neither are there any works like his works. The excellence of his nature gives him alone a claim to absolute sovereignty, "Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord ; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations ? For

to thee doth it appertain, forasmuch as there is none like unto thee." His right to rule is also founded upon his being the Creator of all things, "The Lord is a great King above all gods. The sea is his own, he made it." "O Jacob and Israel, thou art my servant; I have formed thee, thou art my servant, O Israel." In short, his preserving all things, and his manifold mercies to his creatures, give him the best of all claims to absolute dominion. And his infinite wisdom, power, holiness, and justice, not only render him a perfect ruler, but make entire obedience to his authority desirable to all who know their best interests.

Second. God has given laws to all his creatures, by which he governs them. Not to mention those for the control of the inanimate creation; he has prescribed to men their work. "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy." "For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King." We are not in any thing left to our own arbitrary choice. He who has said to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther," has likewise so dealt with man. But the holy laws by which on every hand he has limited man, are not like those set to the waves of the sea; for God deals

with us in a manner suited to our nature. Reason is given to man; and his limits he cannot pass, without abandoning his highest interest.

Third. The great Lawgiver has annexed rewards and punishments to his laws. The authority of God cannot be disregarded with impunity. His glory he will not give to another; and therefore his laws are guarded with suitable rewards and punishments. He was under no obligation to give any reward for obedience, beyond that which flows from obedience. And this is sufficient; for in keeping his commandments "there is great reward." But such was his goodness, that he promised to reward obedience with eternal life. Now this reward is greater than obedience deserved, and suited only to the bounty of the giver. On the other hand, a dreadful penalty is annexed to disobedience. God has not made it impossible for us to break his laws, if we choose to do it; but if we do, the curse is inevitable, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

Fourth. These laws have a fourfold property. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good." "We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal,

sold under sin.” The law is *holy*. It is an exact transcript of the holy will of God. There is nothing in it unworthy of Him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. The law is *just*. It is given as the rule of justice among men. It renders to God his due, as well as to man. Man has no title to any thing, but from this law. Beyond what this grants, nothing can be justly claimed. The law is *good*. It was made with regard to the welfare of those who live under it; and not to gratify the lusts of the wicked. And with this regard to our good in time and eternity, our duty and interest are made inseparable; and disobedience and punishment are alike inseparable. The law is *spiritual*. It is not like human laws, which extend only to outward actions; but it is spiritual, reaching to all the thoughts and intents of the heart. This made the Psalmist exclaim, “I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad.”

SECTION II. *Nature, Extent, &c., of Sin.*—
First. Sin is a want of conformity to the law, of which we have already spoken. This law regards not only actions, but the principle from which they proceed. It not only enjoins holy

thoughts, words, and actions ; but it moreover requires that the habitual temper of our hearts be holy. If we come short of this, we sin. The tree must be good, or the fruit cannot be good. And our services must be performed with all the strength and heart and mind.

Second. Sin imports also a transgression of the law. "For sin is the transgression of the law." Indeed, transgression, in its widest sense, comprehends all sin ; but it is frequently restricted to actual sins, as the former branch of this description is restricted to sins of omission. Sin is opposition to the law of God. God commands us to arise and work, but man refuses and sits still : God forbids specified sinful actions ; but man disregards the prohibition and performs them.

Third. Hence, sin in its nature implies contempt of God ; for it flows from a secret enmity against him. Men may be so blinded as not to view it in this light ; but God makes breaking and contemning the law to be the same thing. "Thus saith the Lord, for three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err,

after the which their fathers have walked." In the view of most men, sin is a harmless thing ; but when seen in its true nature, it is far otherwise ; since it is nothing less than trampling on the authority and goodness of God, and endeavouring, as it were, to dethrone him.

Fourth. But for the further elucidation of this subject, notice a twofold inseparable property or adjunct of sin. First, sin is the defilement of the soul. The beauty and glory of man consists in his conformity to the holy law of God ; and so far as he deviates from this standard, he is polluted and defiled. God has said of sin, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate." Secondly, sin is also attended with a liability to punishment. "The wages of sin is death." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

II. But the word *all*, in the phrase "all have sinned," has a very extensive import.

First. It implies that persons of all ages are involved in the same common misery ; the child, as well as the old man who is stooping into the grave. If children have not sinned "after the similitude of Adam's transgression," they have derived sin enough from Adam to

defile them. The aged need not envy even the infant of days ; for the youngest has sin enough to render it depraved, vicious, and guilty.

Second. Persons of all professions and all ranks are sinners. The apostle speaks of all mankind in two classes, Jew and Gentile, and proves them all to be sinners. Even those very men who have so far forgot themselves as to fancy that they are above all law, are, like others, liable to punishment, for violating the law of God.

SECTION III. *Import of the phrase, "Come short of the glory of God."*—First. Man has fallen short of the glory he had by the conformity of his nature to God. In his first estate he was indeed "the image and glory of God." How wonderfully did the mind of innocent Adam, full of light, represent that God is light, and that in him is no darkness at all ! Other creatures had some fainter representations of the divine glory, wisdom, and power, but man alone, in this lower world, was capable of representing the holiness, righteousness, purity, and other moral perfections of his Maker ; and on this account man was "the glory of God." God, as it were, gloried in him as the master-

piece of this visible creation, in whom more of himself was to be seen than in all the rest besides. But this peculiar excellence man has now lost; he has fallen short of that which made him the glory of God.

Second. Man has lost the glory he had as God's deputy in the world. He was made lord of God's works on earth. Animals came to him to pay homage, and receive names from him in paradise. But now the "crown is fallen from his head;" he has come short of this glory: the creatures refuse subjection to him.

Third. Man has come short of the glory he had in the enjoyment of God in paradise. He had the honour and happiness of conversing freely in Eden with his Maker. And what more could he want, while this blessed intimacy was kept up with the all-sufficient God? But of this he has now come short.

Fourth. Man has come short of the glory he had in prospect. He was originally well furnished for a journey to glory. But the expression, "falling short," contains more than this. Though at first we may suppose it to point only at the negative, yet it certainly includes the positive; and therefore it implies, not only that man has lost his original beauty and con-

formity to the image of God, but that he is fallen and defiled by sin.

Fifth. Not only has man lost the dominion he had, but he is become a slave to sin. He who once was so exalted, is now debased to the image of Satan. He is now exposed to insult, and his life is in jeopardy, even from the meanest of the creatures that once yielded to him as their sovereign. He is now, as it were, scarcely capable of looking towards God, with whom he once enjoyed delightful and soul-refreshing communion. The sight of God, which once was his life, is now to him as death.

Sixth. Not only has man forfeited his title to future happiness, but by sin he has merited endless and inconceivable wo. From how high a hope, into what an abyss of misery, has man fallen by sin ! Where now is the glory ?

But this subject directs us to the source of all this misery. It flows from the guilt of Adam's first sin. By the wise, just, and holy appointment of God, Adam represented all his posterity. Had he stood, in him we all had stood ; we should then have retained our innocence, and with it the love and the smiles of heaven. But by the disobedience of this one man we were all made sinners. "Therefore, as by one

man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

It flows also from the natural depravity of man transmitted to us. We are shapen in iniquity. We cannot bring a clean thing out of an unclean. Our natures have an inclination to evil, "only evil continually." And it flows from abounding temptations. As our hearts are prone to evil, so every thing in this present disorder on account of sin, is suited to carry on the infection. The creatures, by reason of sin, are made subject to vanity. They are made subservient to the lust of men; and the devil and our corrupt hearts daily abuse them to this end. Thus all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

CHAPTER II.

THE SUBJECT DISCUSSED AND APPLIED.

SECTION I. *The charge read and opened.*—

The charge brought against you, reader, is not a slight misdemeanor, that may be atoned for by a bare acknowledgment, or a heartless cry for mercy. It is one of awful magnitude, for it is that of sin against the great Sovereign of the world. Sin is an ordinary word, and most men conclude that but little is comprehended in it. But in reality there is more in it than men or angels can ever fully unfold. Do not consider this a groundless allegation; but consider well the reasons upon which it is founded.

I. Your serious attention is first invited to some *views* of sin.

First. View it in the glass of God's law. The Most High and Holy God has exhibited his will in two tables, containing rules that are holy, just, and every way advantageous for the government of man. Here, you may see sin dashing in pieces these two tables, in a much worse sense than Moses did. Every sin throws them to the ground; for, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of

all." Is it a small thing to trample under foot the holy and righteous law of God, that law which is the image of perfect holiness and spotless purity?

Second. Take a view of sin in the nature of God, the fountain of all glory, excellency, and majesty, and how hateful will it appear! Nothing in all the world, but sin, is opposed to God. The meanest creature, the crawling insect, has nothing in its nature really opposed to the nature of God. Sin, and sin alone, is opposed. With this he cannot dwell. "Evil shall not dwell with him, nor sinners stand in his sight." "O, do not this abominable thing that I hate."

Third. View sin in the threatening of God's law, and see how it is there estimated. All the power of heaven, and the wrath of God, are arrayed against sin. Take one instance in the seventh chapter of the book of Joshua. There, a people accustomed to victory retreat before the enemy, and fall a prey to a people devoted to destruction; and, more than this, God calls all the people accursed, and says, "Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you." But why? what means this vengeance? There was a sin committed; Achan had taken some of the spoil, contrary to the Divine permission. Here a sin-

gle sin brought down the threatenings of God against a whole nation. In short, look through the Bible, and you will see one threatening full of temporal, and another full of eternal plagues; one full of external, and another of internal and spiritual woes; and all directed against sin.

Fourth. View sin in the judgments of God. In one nation, thousands are falling before the avenging enemy; the sword is glutted with blood. In another, as many are swept off by pestilence; and all are wearing out by time. Go to the churchyards, and see the rubbish of many generations. Find you nothing of sin in all this? As Jehu exclaimed, when he saw the dead sons of Ahab, "Who slew all these?" Who brought down these sons of pride, that had just been exulting in warlike glory? Who filled your churchyards with fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, high and low, rich and poor? Surely sin has done it; for "as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Fifth. Listen to one under conviction of sin; read the eighty-eighth Psalm; and there witness the trouble of a soul filled with the terrors of the wrath of God. Now, when you see one thus

crying out in anguish of spirit, and tossed by the billows of divine wrath, were you to ask the occasion of all his distress, he would tell you, sin has caused it all.

Sixth. View sin in the hateful and enormous crimes that are committed. They bring infamy and disgrace even in the eyes of men. Human nature, corrupt as it is, shrinks at their enormity. There are sins which "are not so much as named among the Gentiles." Now, if a man be guilty of these, he becomes odious, even in the eyes of the world. But why? what is there so odious in these crimes, that men flee from the persons guilty of them? There is *sin* in them; and hence they are so hateful; and the only thing that distinguishes these from others, is their circumstantial aggravations; for in their *nature* all sins agree. The least of them, as well as the greatest, is a violation of the holy law of God, and a contempt of the great Law-giver. And if sin appears so odious in these crying enormities, in reality it is as much so when less perceptible in sins more familiar to our corrupt natures.

Seventh. View sin in the case of the finally lost. O! could you look into the pit of wo, and see the damned in chains of darkness, you might then have some sense of the evil of sin. It is sin

which has kindled the flames of everlasting fire. It is sin which thrusts the damned down to hell ; it is sin which holds them there, and will hold them there forever. Could you have a just impression of these things, how hateful would sin appear !

Eighth. View sin in the sufferings of Christ. Here, O sinner, as in a glass, behold your own heart. You think it a little matter that you have sinned ; you “roll sin as a sweet morsel under your tongue.” But come, now, and see it holding the sword ; or rather thrusting it into the Saviour’s side ! Here is a sight which made the earth tremble, and the sun hide his face. Here you see how God looks upon sin. All the affection he bore to the Son of his eternal love, could not stay the hand of justice from inflicting death upon him, for the sin of the world. Here you may see more of the evil of sin than anywhere else. Deep indeed must the pollution be, if nothing but the blood of the Son of God could wash it away. Never did we have more dreadful evidence of the power of sin than when it blinded the eyes of men, so that they could not discern “the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ;” though his Divine nature daily beamed through his human, in words which none but God could

speak, and works which none but God could do. Yet such was the power of sin, that it hurried men to the awful crime of imbruing their hands in the blood of the Son of God.

But perhaps some may ask, what have we to do with this? *We* have never put to death the Son of God, and hence we cannot here see any crime of our own. But suppose we grant what you say as to your innocence in this matter, yet here we see much of the nature of sin; since all sin partakes of the same common nature, and is every way equal to, if not the very same, against which God in so awful a manner manifested his displeasure, when he “spared not his own Son,” but “laid on him the iniquity of us all.” But does not that very sin lie at your door? Dare you raise your eyes to Heaven, and say, that you received Christ the first time an offer of him was made to you? If not, then you do as much as to say that putting him to death was no crime. By your conduct you justify the Jews, and thus in their crimes you may see your own. There can be no neutral ground here. All to whom the Gospel comes, must be either for or against the Jews in their rejecting and crucifying Christ; and in no other way can we give testimony against them, than by believing the Gospel report, that he was the Son of God, the Saviour of

the world. So far as we lack this belief, we are guilty of the death of Christ; for unbelief subscribes to the charge of the Jews against him, and declares him an impostor. You are either a believer or an unbeliever. If a believer, then it was for your very sins that Christ was crucified. For "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." If you are an unbeliever, then you reject the witness Christ gave of himself; and therefore you practically declare him an impostor, and worthy of death; and you virtually give your consent to the cruelty of the Jews in the sentence of his condemnation.

II. Notice also some of the great evils implied in sin.

First. The least sin has *atheism* in it. An Atheist, or one who denies the existence of a God, is a creature so degenerate, that some have doubted whether there ever was a human being who disbelieved the existence of God. But there are many practical Atheists, who "profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto

every good work reprobate." The Psalmist thus describes the natural man: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." From this state of the heart flows a train of practical impieties; "Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity; there is none that doeth good." Now the Psalmist here speaks of the whole race of Adam; and the Apostle to the Romans employs the passage above quoted to prove that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And, indeed, do we not all deny his sovereignty when we violate his laws? When we commit sin, do we not deny and dishonour his holiness? Do we not disparage his wisdom, when we set up our own will as the guide of our actions? And do we not deny his all-sufficiency when we find more in sin or in the creature than in him? In short, sin, one way or another, is a denial of all God's attributes, and therefore every sin has Atheism in it; and they who are most ready to question this truth are probably the most guilty.

Second. Every sin has *idolatry* in it. But you say you have never bowed down to an idol; you were better taught. But do you think that Pagan rites alone have idolatry in them? The prophet Ezekiel speaks of those who were as punctual as you are in attending upon the ex-

ternal duties of religion ; they were externally in covenant with God as well as you. Nor is it at all improbable that they abjured external idolatry ; for the Jews after the Babylonish captivity, when Ezekiel lived, never followed idols as before. Yet hear the message of the Prophet to them : “ Son of man, these men have set up their idols *in their heart*, and have put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face.” Every one is an idolater who gives to any thing but God that place in his heart which belongs to God alone. Who is not guilty of this when he serves sin ? For by serving sin, he substitutes either himself or Satan in God’s room.

Third. Sin has *blasphemy* in it. It reproaches God. They who “ set their mouth against the heavens ” are not the only blasphemers, but those also who reproach God in their actions. “ But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord ; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall be utterly cut off ; his iniquity shall be upon him.” God in his laws designed to manifest his wisdom as the Supreme Governor of the

world. But the sinner's conduct charges God with folly, inasmuch as he prefers his own will to the divine commands. Sin also reproaches God's goodness; for in refusing subjection to his laws, the sinner practically declares that these laws have not sufficient goodness in them to claim his obedience; that God by them has deprived him of that good which ought to have been conceded. And sin likewise reproaches the righteousness and holiness of God; for these attributes are stamped upon that law, which sinners reject and trample on. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar," and to disbelieve God is to accuse him either of unrighteousness or folly. Now this part of the charge goes even beyond Atheism; for the Atheist entirely disowns God, and so entertains no such unsuitable thoughts of him as he who owns him, and yet by his practice accuses him of ignorance, unrighteousness or folly.

Fourth. Every sin has *robbery* in it. One part of God's glory, which he has said he will not give to another, is his absolute dominion. Now every sinner, so far as he disobeyes God, endeavours to take from him the command and exercise it himself, or give it to another, than which there can be no greater robbery. He who obeys the command, gives God the glory

of his authority and owns him Governor of the world. And this is a part of God's property ; it is the revenue he requires of the world ; but the sinner, by every sin he commits, endeavours to rob him of this glory. "Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings! Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." So sinners now may ask, Wherein have we robbed God? We may reply, You have robbed him of that which is far more valuable than tithes and offerings. In every sin you rob him of that which is better to him than sacrifice. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Fifth. Every sin has *rebellion* in it. The infamy of rebellion has often been put upon men for disobeying the unlawful and impious commands of their fellow-men, while disobedience to God has received a more mild and favourable name. But if we call things by their right names, sin alone is rebellion, and of this crime every sinner is guilty. "If ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandments of the Lord, then shall the

hand of the Lord be against you." Thus you see that God has declared disobedience and rebellion to be the same thing, and hence every sin is rebellion against God.

Sixth. Every sin has *murder* in it. If he that "hateth his brother is a murderer," certainly he who sins against his own soul is no less so. It is sin that destroys the soul; and he who practises sin does that which murders not the body only, but body and soul. The sinner is therefore a self-murderer. But again, if he who "hateth his brother is a murderer," and if "the carnal mind is enmity against God," is the latter offence deserving of a milder name than the former? Not that every one who hates his brother intends to murder him; but that hatred to a brother, so far as it goes, tends that way; nor that every sinner intends to dethrone and destroy his Maker; but that sin, so far as it goes, tends that way. If enmity to God were acted out without limit, it would take away the divine sovereignty, and with it, the divine will and glory; and without these, God, as God, could not exist.

We have now seen, that in sinning you are guilty of atheism, idolatry, blasphemy, robbery, rebellion, and murder. But,

III. These offences, in themselves considered,

are not all; they are attended with many fearful aggravations, which, as it were, are so many ciphers put after the figures, that, though in themselves nothing, when put after, swell the number to a prodigious amount.

First. You have sinned in the face of all the Divine threatenings. When the torments of hell have been before you, you have still dared to provoke the Most High; thus despising these evidences of his anger. Who, in some remarkable instance or other, has not seen the judgments of God against sinners? And yet you go on in sin. You sin against glorious Gospel ordinances, all of which are designed to prevent or destroy sin. You have sinned against the strivings of the Holy Spirit, which are given in mercy to lead you to repentance. And you have sinned against Jesus Christ, who has died for the sins of men. The God who has provided all these helps against sin, is the God against whom you have rebelled in all these fearful violations of his law.

Second. You have sinned against God, notwithstanding all the favours with which he has loaded you. Sad requital for all his loving-kindness; "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken: I have nou-

rished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.”

Thousands of the Divine favours are shown you every day. God loads you with his benefits, while you load yourselves with sins against him. You make these very mercies, as it were, weapons of unrighteousness to fight against him. Whatever good you see around you, whatever you enjoy, you have from him. In him you live, and move, and have your being. Therefore your sins are all acts of great ingratitude; and in this respect man is worse than the beasts of the field. “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib.” The dumbest beast knows who treats him kindly, and gives indications of gratitude for the kindness; but sinners rebel against the God of their mercies, and thus are guilty of the grossest ingratitude. Reader, will you continue thus to requite the Lord?

Third. All this wickedness is without any provocation. When subjects rebel against their rulers, they will plead some excuse for their rebellion. But what can you say to justify rebellion against God? What fault have you found in him that you should forsake his ways? “Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the king of Jacob.” He made the universe, and placed

you upon the earth. He sustains you by his power, and every hour gives you the tokens of his kindness. By his wisdom he guides the affairs of earth and heaven, and provides for your every want, and there is none like him to be his competitor. Who then can dispute his claim to the sovereignty of the world? Who can say that any of his laws are unjust? "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Who will dare to plead that any of the Divine laws are too strict in their demands? For who cannot see that society is prosperous and happy, just in proportion as men yield to the wisdom of the Divine laws? And thus you sin without the least prospect of advantage. You "spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not." Could you plead the possibility of advantage, or were you overcome by temptation which there were no means of avoiding or resisting, your case would be otherwise; but this you dare not plead, you can plead nothing but that you are guilty.

This is the charge against you; what have you to answer to it? You must say with Job; "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse." If you acknowledge your

guilt, as certainly you must, what means your indifference? Why are you not alarmed for your soul? Do you not believe that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?" Is the punishment of iniquity nothing to be dreaded? Plead not, reader, that your conscience has never accused you of the sins which have now been charged upon you. You may have laboured to keep the eyes of your conscience closed, lest it should reprove you, and give you pain; or your sins may have lulled it to sleep, so that, if it speak at all, its voice is too feeble to rouse you from your indifference. And if the frequency of your sins has rendered you insensible to their malignity, you cannot plead that you are the less guilty. If God has declared your sins to be what they have now been represented, beware that you be not found disputing and fighting against God.

SECTION II. *Witnesses produced to prove the charge.*—First. God is witness against you, as he was against his people of old. "Even I know, and am a witness, saith the Lord." "And if we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." Such are the words of the just Judge of all the

earth ; and therefore there can be no malice or injustice in your condemnation. “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” Certainly it could be no pleasure to him to ruin the work of his own hands. You cannot then question the validity of this witness.

Second. Jesus Christ, the Amen and Faithful Witness, gives evidence against you. He came to bear witness of the truth. “He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” The very name of Christ is a witness. He is called Jesus, because “he shall save his people from their sins.” This implies that they are all sinners.

Third. The Holy Spirit is a witness. It is one of the offices of the Spirit to convince of sin. “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin.” And if this witness should speak to your heart and conscience, as he sometimes speaks, you would need no more witnesses. Thus, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit bear record, and set their seal to this truth. Now the testimony of two men of veracity is sufficient to prove a man guilty, however

great the crime alleged against him ; but “ if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.”

Fourth. Your own conscience is witness against you. I appeal to this. You do indeed bear witness against yourselves. Those who are baptized do it in baptism ; for, as “ the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick,” so the clean need not washing, but the defiled ; and he who washes admits his need of cleansing. Your attendance on Gospel ordinances is a witness against you, that you are defiled with sin ; for all these ordinances aim at the salvation of sinners. The very name Christian is a witness ; for if you are a Christian, you belong to Christ, and Christ’s people are those whom he saves from their sins. He came to “ save his people from their sins.”

Fifth. The Sacred Scriptures are a witness. They are full of the sad truth, that you are a guilty sinner. “ As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one ; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” The Scriptures do not make one exception among all the sons of men.

Sixth. The preachers of the Gospel are witnesses against you, that you have sinned. This testimony is implied in the very design of their office. The apostle Paul, in his epistle to Timothy, states that the object of preachers of the Gospel should be to save themselves and others. When they preach Christ to you, they proclaim your need of him, because of your sins. When they offer you a Saviour, they in effect assert that you are lost ; for none but the lost have need of a Saviour to save them. When they preach repentance, they affirm that all have sins which render repentance necessary. When they entreat you to be reconciled to God, their words imply that you are his enemy. And when they preach Christ to you, you must either receive or reject him. If you receive him, it is testimony that you were a sinner, and in need of him. If you reject him, you stand charged with unbelief, one of the greatest sins. "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son ; and this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

Seventh. The whole creation asserts that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. "The whole creation groaneth, and tra-

vaileth in pain together until now." And it is "the bondage of corruption," sin, which causes the groans. The sin of man has caused it all. The beasts which you wear out with toil, to administer to your wants, or abuse to administer to your pleasures, or torment when you are angry; and the animals which you slaughter for your daily meat, all groan for your sin. And were your ears not deafened by sin, you would hear the groans of the very ground upon which you tread, the food which you eat, and the clothes which you wear. It is not the use, it is the perversion of the creation, which makes the groaning. The sun that shines upon the sinner seems to groan, that it must give light to one who uses that light as an occasion of sinning against God. The earth groans in thunders, and lightnings, and whirlwinds, and volcanoes, and earthquakes, and pestilence, and famine, and war, that its surface must bear the oppressive load of man's sin. And the food that we eat complains, that it must be perverted to serve man's lust, and give him that strength which he spends in sinning against God. "The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it."

Eighth. Finally, the judgments of God are witnesses. What has filled the earth with mi-

sery and death? Can there be an instance of suffering that is not a witness of sin? "Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished being innocent?" "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground." And above all, the unparalleled sufferings of Christ bear the most incontestible witness to the sins of man; "for he was wounded for our transgressions." And death bears fearful testimony that man has sinned; for "the wages of sin is death." None then can plead freedom from guilt till they can plead exemption from death. But as no man will pretend exemption from death, all evasions in this matter must be vain. Reader, you may deceive yourself, if you choose, up to the hour of death. But death will strip off every mask, and make you honest. It will convince you that you have sinned, and for your sins, your soul is lost.

SECTION III. *Address to different classes of persons.*—The apostle John, in the second chapter of his first Epistle, includes all sorts and ages of persons in three classes, "little children," "young men," and "fathers;" or the young, the middle aged, and the aged. Before addressing these three classes separately, a few preliminary remarks are necessary. Our ob-

ject should be to be useful here, and happy hereafter. God has appointed us our work; and whether he has given us much or little, we are to employ it all to promote his glory in the world; and thoughts, words, and actions, not subservient to our usefulness, or our ultimate happiness, are sinful. We were not made for ourselves alone, but for the world; and, therefore, we are to labour for the temporal and eternal good of others, as well as ourselves. And it is obvious that much of our fitness or unfitness for this end must depend upon the right or wrong management of childhood and youth. Childhood and youth are, as it were, a mould in which men are cast. Every one knows the permanence of early impressions. The Sacred Scriptures recognise the same: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

It is equally important for all to remember that the Divine "commandment is exceeding broad." It is more than a law of external actions. We may avoid wicked external actions, and still come short of obeying the Divine commands. Not only will God "bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil;" but "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give

an account thereof in the day of judgment ;” and thoughts also are to be taken into the account ; for “the thought of foolishness is sin.” “How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?” was Jeremiah’s reproof to Jerusalem. Indeed, it is obvious that all is wrong, while the thoughts are wrong. For as a man “thinketh in his heart, so is he.” If the thoughts of the heart are right, the actions will also be right ; but if the thoughts be evil, whatever the actions may be, they do not proceed from right motives, and therefore they are sinful. Even the “ploughing of the wicked,” is said to be “sin.” Not that the wicked should cease from ploughing, but that they can do nothing acceptable to God, while their hearts are not right in his sight. And the Scriptures teach that we came into the world with wicked, depraved hearts ; and thus the broadness of the command reaches to every period of life. The Psalmist exclaims, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.” “The wicked are estranged from the womb ; they go astray as soon as they are born.” Augustine bitterly lamented the sins of his childhood. “Was it not ill and sin,” said he, “to seek with tears what would have proved hurtful if it had been given ? to be angry with those who were nowise obliged to be under my command,

because they would not obey me? Was it not ill, that I endeavoured to strike even those who were every way my superiors, because they would not obey me in those things wherein they could not obey, without hurt either to me or some others?"

In prosecuting this subject, three things must be kept in mind. First, all the thoughts, words, and deeds of one who has not been "born again," are sinful; for a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Secondly, whatever has not respect to the glory of God, as its end, is sin. "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Thirdly, whatever is not done in the name of Christ, as the one through whom our persons and performances are to be accepted, is sin; "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

I. Children and young persons, I have a message to you from God. All of you, even the youngest, "have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" that is, you have done that for which you will be cast, soul and body, into hell, if you are not reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

If you read the fifty-first Psalm, you will see that you were born sinners. And every day brings you intelligence of the death of some person, once as young, as healthy, and apparently as likely to live as you. And if God should now take you away by death, what would become of you, if you are not reconciled to him?

Perhaps you wish to know what some of the sins are of which you are guilty. Did you never disobey your parents? If you did, you disobeyed God; for God commands children to obey and honour their parents. And when your parents or teachers have corrected you for your faults, were you never angry at them? If so, it was sinful. It is sinful to be angry at them; and sinful not to do better when corrected. "Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way; and he that hateth reproof shall die." Tell me, when you had thoughts that you were ill-treated by some of your companions, did you never desire to be avenged? "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath." Do you not sometimes become angry with your companions, and call them by opprobrious or reproachful names? This then is another sin. Whoever calls his brother a "fool, shall be in danger of

hell-fire." Do you not sometimes wish to be out of sight of your parents, or teachers, so as to do what you would fear to do in their presence? If so, surely you must have forgotten that God is everywhere, or you would never presume to do before him, what you dare not do before your parents. Have you not been glad when the Sabbath day was over, or at least when divine service was closed? Has it not been a burden to you to sit so long in the house of worship? And during divine worship, are you not thinking of your sports and your pastime? or what is worse, talking to one another, instead of listening to the preacher? This is also sinful; for God regards those as mockers, who draw nigh to him with their lips, or with forms of worship, while their hearts are far from him. Do you pray to God morning and evening? I fear that many of you are so wicked as to forget or neglect to pray morning and evening. If you have never been guilty of stealing, have you not sometimes been guilty of telling lies, or of profane swearing? Now the Bible tells us, that such persons "shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." Did you never go to your play when you should have gone to your prayers? And what will become of children, who think

more of their sports than of God and their souls? I will ask you but one question more, and that is, if possible, to awaken you to a concern for your soul. Do you ever think of death? If you look into a grave when it is opened, instead of one who has life, who can speak and walk, you see nothing but lifeless remains, fast returning to dust. But in a little while you will be thus mouldering in the grave. You must certainly die, and you know not how soon. And if the sins of which I have told you, and probably very many other sins of which I know nothing, be not forgiven, you cannot be saved. Will you not then repent of sin immediately?

But perhaps you wish to be told what you must do in order to be saved. First of all, give your heart to the Lord. Repent and turn to him. Pray like the distressed publican; "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner," say, "Lord, thou hast promised a new heart to sinners like me, and I have need of it, for my heart is very wicked. Save me from my sins, for Christ's sake." Who knows but that the Lord, who hears the lions and the ravens when they cry for food, may hear you. Read your Bible and your Catechism; but first pray to God to bless them to you, and make you understand what

you read. Do not lie, nor swear, nor break the Sabbath, nor commit any of the sins of which I have told you; and, in short, strive to avoid every sin whatever. Avoid the company of those who lie, swear, and break the Sabbath; for they will try to make you as bad as themselves. "A companion of fools shall be destroyed," but "he that walketh with wise men shall be wise." Never forget to pray to God as soon as you rise in the morning, and before you lie down to sleep at night.

Now there are many things to encourage you to follow the advice now given. A promise is made to those who seek God early in life. "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." Samuel, Abijah, Josiah, and Timothy, are highly commended in the Bible for their early piety. Our Saviour received little children with the most tender affection. He says of them, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." "And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." O, if you knew how good he is, you would not rest till you should know how he is to be found, and then you would immediately go to him. If you seek God early, God will bless you; and his people will bless you; and all

generations will call you blessed. O, then, make glad the hearts of your parents, and the people of God; make glad your own heart, by seeking the Lord and saving your soul.

II. I have a few words to persons in middle life. It has already been shown that all are defiled with sin; but a few particulars in reference to this class of persons will be needful.

First. What, then, is your conduct in the house of God, if you are ever found there? When you go to the place of worship, what induces you to go? Is it mere custom? Is it fear of being less respected by staying away? Do you go to stop the mouth of conscience by a form of worship, without the spirit of it? Do you go to see and be seen, to gratify curiosity? What is your conduct in the house of worship? Do you listen to the preaching of the Gospel as an idle tale? Do you apply the truth to others, and not to yourselves? Do you observe the manner in which the truth is spoken, more than the truth itself? Do you listen to the word at all, or are your thoughts wandering upon other matters? Once more I ask, what good do you obtain by going to the house of God? Do you get convictions and then cast them off? Do you hear calls to repentance, and disregard them? reproofs, and hate them? instructions,

and forget them? Who of you can candidly answer these questions, without confessing that he has committed very aggravated sins even in the place and hour of worship?

Second. If we follow you to your daily employments, how shall we find you conducting there? If you have no regular and lawful employment, then this is a sin; but if you have, did you ask God to direct you in your choice among the various occupations of life? "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Did you then acknowledge God in the choice of your occupation? Do you endeavour to ascertain how you can glorify God in your daily employments? Are there not many of you who never had one thought of glorifying God in your employments? And do you look to God for a blessing on the works of your hands? To whom do you attribute the success of your efforts? Do you ever bless God for that success? And when successful, what use do you make of your success? Does it make you humble, or lift you up? Do you spend the gifts of God in the service of sin, or as the Gospel requires?

Third. If you were to be examined in your intercourse with the world, how would you stand the test? Do you love communications

that are made in the fear of God, or those which are not? "Evil communications corrupt good manners." "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." What company do you most delight in? "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." And if you are pleased with the company of religious persons, is it their affability, their discretion, their learning, or some other good quality, if they possess any of these things; or is it their religion which most pleases you? Let me entreat you to inquire every night of your soul, how you have conducted through the day; what has been your conversation; whether you have bridled your tongue, or employed it in speaking vain and idle words. "If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." Have you spoken evil of any one? "Put them in mind—to speak evil of no man." How grossly do men violate these precepts every day.

All of you stand, in some way or other, related to others, either as masters or servants, parents or children, husbands or wives. These relations demand peculiar duties. Have you

fulfilled or even thought of half these duties? In engaging persons in your employment, did you ask for direction from God? It is to be feared, that even in a matter so important as the choice of husbands and wives, few go to God in prayer for his direction. Again, how do you conduct in these relations? And do you ask God to teach you your duty in them all? And especially I would ask, do you seek the spiritual good of all connected with you in these relations? Masters, servants, parents, children, husbands, wives, do you pray for one another? Can there be husbands and wives, who never pray for each other? Parents for children, and children for parents, will toil with long patience for the body; when perhaps they have never prayed for each other's salvation.

Fourth. In your seasons of secret worship, how are you occupied? Do you take more time in the morning for adorning your bodies than your souls? Nay, do not some of you go to your daily employment without praying to God at all? If you pray in secret, what leads you to it, a conscientious regard to duty, or custom, or some other wrong motive? And is the duty a burden, or is it pleasant to you? Can you say that you perform it in such a manner as to receive the promised blessing in return?

And in your hours of worship, and also at other times, what thoughts most readily come into your minds, those about your body, or your soul; those about God or those about the world? What thoughts do you most delight in? If the thoughts be earthly, so must be your mind, and "to be carnally minded is death." And now, if these general views now given discover so many sins, what would be the amount, were we to reckon every vain and wicked act, and word, and thought, as will be done in the day of judgment? And if every sin deserves the wrath of God, what must be the desert of those who step into eternity laden with the guilt of innumerable transgressions? Think, O think on these things before it be too late.

III. I have also a message to the aged. Your faces speak your age, and tell that there is but a step betwixt you and eternity. And are not these very faces proof of sin? Why are those once smooth, now covered with the wrinkles of age and the paleness of approaching death? Has not sin, or God on account of sin, done it all? "Thou hast filled me with wrinkles," said Job, "which is a witness against me, and my leanness rising up in me beareth witness to my face." If you are not sinners, why that trembling of the hands, that dimness of the eyes, and

that tottering step? And have you not the sins of a whole life to account for? Of the wicked it is said, "His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust." You have lived to old age, and therefore have had much time given you; but how has it been improved? What have you done for God? You were made to glorify him; but are there not many of you who never had one serious thought of advancing the glory of God? If so, then your whole life has been one continued course of sin. As many as have been your thoughts, words, and actions, so many are your sins. And what have you done for your souls during a long life? We have a work to perform in regard to our salvation; God has given us a day for it, which is to be followed by a night wherein no man can work. Your day is almost spent. Is it not twilight with many of you already? Are not the shadows of evening falling upon you, and your work is not yet begun? Awful condition! Your work not begun! A work sufficient for many years not yet begun, when your sun is setting to leave you in eternal night!

Have you been suitably affected with the sins of others when you have observed them? Have you done your duty in bearing testimony

to the truth of God, when you have seen it despised and rejected? Have you beheld the transgressors without grief? Have you prayed that the sins you have seen in others might be forgiven? "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death." Has it been your endeavour, in all suitable ways and times, to reprove sin, and to prevent it in yourself and others?

You have witnessed many providences, perhaps many judgments of God; and what effect have these had upon you? Have they made you better, or have you become hardened under them? Have your experiences brought you nearer to God, or driven you farther from him? And how have his mercies affected you? Do you know the God of your mercies? Has the goodness of God led you to repentance? When food and raiment and every earthly good has been granted you, have you lifted up your heart and voice in thankfulness to the Giver of mercy? When delivered from sickness, pain, and peril, did you thank the Lord for deliverance? When he has thus dealt mercifully and bountifully with you, have you loved him more and more, or has it all served only to fix your

heart more firmly upon the world? Let conscience speak, and will it not tell you of unnumbered sins? The bloom of youth has withered on your brow; your silver locks bear witness that nature is hastening to decay. You know that the silver cord with you must soon be loosed, and the golden bowl be broken. Are you then prepared to lay your bodies down in the grave in the hope of the resurrection of the just?

Finally. You have lived long, and death is at your door. Are you prepared and willing to die, when the time of your departure shall arrive? Some desire to die because they are disappointed and vexed with the world; but none are prepared to die but those who are prepared to "die in the Lord." Have you provided your lodgings? When our houses are falling, it is time to look for new lodgings. This tabernacle is ready to be dissolved; have you secured a building of God, a house not made with hands? You have had good opportunity for doing all this, and great are your sins if the work is not yet begun. The warnings which you read in these pages, if you give no heed to them, will aggravate your guilt. Consider your case before it be too late. You

have waited till the eleventh hour and have done nothing, one hour more of delay will seal your doom.

SECTION IV. *Satisfaction required of the sinner.*—It is not consistent with the wisdom of our great Lawgiver, that sin should be unpunished. His providence and his word agree, that “though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.” No power of men or angels can prevent it; and nothing can conceal us from the omniscient eye. “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, and whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me, yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.” “There is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves,” either from the knowledge or the justice of the Almighty.

First. There will be the forfeiture of your

estates. You invaded God's possessions; he will cast you out of yours. This is the usual punishment of rebellion. In primeval innocence, man was in possession of a fair estate. He had a paradise furnished with the riches of uncorrupted nature; a body free from pain; a soul happy in communion with God; delicious fruits in spontaneous abundance; and all crowned with the blessing of Heaven. To this we may add the expectation of everlasting happiness in the paradise above. But all this has been forfeited by sin. Nor is it of any avail to say that, as you have houses, lands, food, raiment, and other things, you have therefore lost nothing; for a rebel sentenced to die is allowed food and raiment, and other things necessary for the support of life, till the time of his execution arrive. Thus God allows man the means of subsistence till he sees fit to put the sentence of death in execution. The grant by which innocent man held his possessions was the covenant of works. This, too, was the ground upon which he looked for the rewards of the future. But by the breach of that covenant was lost all right to any enjoyment. And with the title, you have lost the sweetness of the things you are yet permitted to use. What profit is there of all your labour under the sun? you labour,

but are never satisfied, and the day of your execution draws nigh.

Second. But there will not only be this forfeiture, satisfaction will also be had in the death of the offenders. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." Nor is this limited to natural death; it includes endless pain in a future state. Innocent man had a natural life, which consisted in a most delightful and harmonious union of soul and body. He had a spiritual life, which consisted in the union of his soul to God, in a manner suited to the happiness of his condition; and he had a fair prospect of eternal life, in uninterrupted communion with his Maker. But these bright hopes were blasted by sin. The sinner is already condemned to die. "He that believeth not is condemned already." Nay, more; the execution is already begun. Those who are not savingly changed by the Holy Spirit are spiritually dead; "dead in trespasses and sins." As a dead body cannot perform the actions of a living one, so you cannot perform any of the actions of spiritual life. Natural death, which consists in the separation of the soul and body, is also begun in you. Every disease that invades the body is like the posts that run to meet one another, "to show the

king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end." Every pain you feel makes a breach in your walls, and forebodes their speedy ruin. Your life is nothing but a succession of dying. Every day and hour is wearing it away. Every fresh attack on your bodies is routing their guards, battering the ramparts of your flesh, and threatening the very citadel of life. You are the mark at which justice is aiming its arrows. Do you not see that the arrow sometimes flies above your head, and slays one above you? Sometimes it lights at your feet, and slays a child; sometimes it flies on your left, and kills an enemy, at whose death you may, perhaps, wickedly rejoice; sometimes it pierces the friend on your right hand; and who has assured you that the next one may not strike you dead, and hurry you into hell? :

Third. This is not all; rebels are commonly shorn of their honour; and so with the sinner. Innocent man enjoyed a high dignity; he was the friend, as well as the subject of God. But now hear his sentence; "Thus saith the Lord God, remove the diadem, and take off the crown!" Tell me, reader, do you not already feel the direful effects of this part of the punishment? The beasts, once subject to man, are now his enemies, because he is the enemy of

God. Even those that are most serviceable and obedient often rebel. The horse throws his rider; the ox gores his owner; wild beasts make inroads upon the flocks, fields, and fruits, and fill men with terror; and even insects often insult and vex you, and sometimes inflict a wound which destroys life. Nor is the disgrace confined to the individual. It is handed down to posterity. And not only inborn corruption, but the contagion of your evil example must produce its desolating effects upon those who come after you. God has declared himself "a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children." Nothing which sinners have used can be spared. The very ground upon which they tread must undergo the fires of the last day, before it can be freed from the bondage of corruption. "This is thy lot, the portion of thy measure from me, saith the Lord, because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood." Such is the satisfaction required of sinners.

SECTION V. *Reasonableness of this Satisfaction.*—That the satisfaction demanded of sinners, or the punishment inflicted, is reasonable, will be evident, if we consider,

I. The demerit of sin. Consider against

whom sin is committed. We measure offences, in some degree, by the character of the persons against whom they are done ; and so it is in the laws of God. For some offences, the daughter of the high-priest was to be burned without mercy ; which was not the punishment of others for the same offences. He that cursed his father or mother was to be put to death ; but no such punishment was inflicted upon any one for cursing his equals. On the other hand, God is the “high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity ;” before him all nations “are as nothing ; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.” What punishment, then, does reason show to be just for the sins of man against God ? True, we cannot injure our Maker, as a rebel may injure his prince. “If thou sinnest, what dost thou against Him ? or if thy transgression be multiplied, what dost thou unto him ?” We cannot scale the walls of heaven, and force our way to the Almighty’s throne ; yet men are said to “rob God.” The depth of the guilt of sin is, that it is committed against a holy God. Every sin reflects upon God’s holiness, tramples on his authority, brands his wisdom with folly, denies his goodness, and bids defiance to his power. Can endless punishment be too much for such crimes ? Consider,

also, the obligations that sin tramples on. The obligations of children to parents, of subjects to their rulers, and of husbands and wives to each other, are such as to render the violation of them exceedingly sinful. But what are all these compared with our obligations to God; who is not a finite earthly ruler or parent, but the infinite Father of mercies, and Supreme Ruler of the universe.

Observe further, that sin deserves such a punishment in the judgment of God; and surely his judgment must be according to truth. We have this judgment not only in express declarations of Scripture, not only in the penal sanction of the law, but eminently in the death of Christ. If an infinite person must be laid under the wrath of God, stand in the sinner's room, and die for sins, what less does the sinner himself deserve than eternal wrath? No wonder, then, that the finally impenitent are to be forever tormented for their sins. For, if God, without reproach to his goodness, could permit his sinless, divine, and dearly beloved Son to suffer for others' sins, much more could he justly permit sinful, impenitent man, to suffer endless punishment. And not only in the judgment of God, but in the judgment of men also, does sin deserve

such a punishment. Notwithstanding the wild fancies of the heathen about a future state, they all admit the doctrine of endless punishment. Hence their poets represented Tantalus as doomed forever to be parched with thirst, standing in a river, of whose water he could never taste one drop; Prometheus was to have a vulture forever tearing his liver; Sisyphus was to be perpetually labouring to roll a huge stone, and Ixion, his wheel. And all the codes of human law prescribe perpetual imprisonment for some crimes, and death for others; which is a deprivation of life and all its advantages forever; and a deprivation of all opportunity of preparing for heaven. We might to this testimony add the acknowledgment of those who are punished. Whatever stupid sinners may think, when the Lord deals with men, and visits them with the terrors of an awakened conscience, convincing them of sin, they will subscribe to the justice of God, when he threatens eternal pain. It is not meant that they will be willing to be damned, but they will acknowledge that God would be just in thus punishing them. Even those who are given up to the horrors of despair give the same testimony. Listen to the words of Spira: "I am sealed up to eternal wrath. I

tell you I deserve it; my own conscience condemns me; what need is there of any other judge? Though there were not another damned, yet God is just in making me an example to others; and I cannot justly complain. There is no punishment so great, but I have justly deserved it."

II. Consider, again, that God, in promulgating his laws, did clearly declare that he would thus punish transgressors. Sin and endless pain were then linked together. When it was required of Adam to keep the divine commands, it was also said to him, In the day that thou breakest them, "thou shalt surely die." To suppose that death here means annihilation, is contrary both to Scripture and reason. And if only temporal death were intended, it would be equivalent to saying, If thou disobey, thou shalt surely be rewarded with eternal life; which would be absurd. Spiritual, everlasting death, then, must be intended. But if this penalty is annexed to the violation of the divine law, there is great reason why it should be executed. For to what purpose would the penalty be threatened, if it were not designed to be enforced? To suppose the contrary would be to cast reproach both upon the wisdom and veracity of God. Divine honour,

then, demands the execution of this law. Indeed, what is the business of an officer of justice, but to execute the laws?

Justice requires the punishment of sinners. Justice to the law requires it. For if the law may be neglected in one part, why not in another? And if the threatenings of the divine law are not enforced, where is our assurance that the divine promises will be fulfilled? Justice to the subjects of a law requires the same. If in sin offenders go unpunished, we view it as a temptation to the obedient to transgress; it inclines us to view transgression as a light matter, and to call in question the competency of the Lawgiver. Justice to the divine faithfulness demands the same. For, if God does not faithfully perform all he has declared, eternal truth itself must lie open to suspicion. Indeed, all the divine attributes are engaged to see the laws executed, inasmuch as they are all attributes of the same all-wise and eternal Being.

III. We may show, further, that the connection of sin and punishment is most just and equal. If we admit that God is just, we must admit, also, that all his words and works are just. God has made the sanction; therefore it is just. "Is God unrighteous who taketh ven-

geance? (I speak as a man) God forbid; for then how shall God judge the world?" Moreover this punishment is just, because it was one of the terms of a contract; the substance of which was, do and live, sin and die. And all ground of complaint is removed by the fact, that man has had timely warning of the punishment. Suppose the lord of a manor to have made a precipice in some part of his land; and to have warned his servant that if he ventured to this precipice, it would surely prove his death. Now, if the servant should voluntarily go to this dangerous spot, and fall, and be dashed in pieces, after having been faithfully warned to keep away, would the owner of the land be guilty of his death? With as little justice can God be charged with the death of sinners, since they neglect his warnings, and thus destroy themselves.

Consider, too, the influence this threatening of punishment must have upon those who are saved. It moves ministers to preach. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord we persuade men." And it moves men to accept of salvation. Hence the frequency with which our Lord mentioned it in all his preaching. And, finally, consider the necessity of this punishment in order to the government of the world. For if men are so

bold in sin, notwithstanding the terrible penalty annexed, what might we expect were this penalty lessened or removed.

SECTION VI. *The misery of sinners.*—I. If a vast loss can make you miserable, then is your misery unspeakably great. Those alone can estimate it, who are in the enjoyment of the advantages you lose, or who are writhing in the torment to which you are doomed.

You now cleave so fast to the world, that neither the promises nor the threatenings of the Gospel are sufficient to make you quit your hold. And yet death will strip you of every thing you have most delight in. Your property, your friends, your carnal mirth, all will be left on this side of the grave. The Gospel, too, you will lose, when God punishes you. The Gospel has in it treasures for the poor, eyes for the blind, feet for the lame, understanding for the simple, peace for rebels, pardon for condemned malefactors, a title to heaven for the heirs of hell, life for the dead, and happiness for the miserable. What loss can be compared with this? It may appear small to you now, but death will open your eyes to see its value. And heaven, too, you will lose forever. Who can measure the greatness of such a loss? Who

can weigh that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? Who can take the dimensions of the vast "inheritance of the saints in light?" Who can count the treasures of the paradise of God? Who can fathom the rivers of pleasure that are at God's right hand for evermore? Who can conceive of that blissful sight, where the eye is not obscured by intervening clouds? All this you must lose forever. You lose God, you lose your own souls; and what will it profit you to gain the whole world and lose your souls? In a word, you lose all the treasures of this world and of that which is to come.

II. And not only will you suffer the absence of pleasure, but you must endure positive, unspeakable pain forever, both of soul and body. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Who can "dwell with the devouring fire?" Who can "dwell with everlasting burnings?" You cannot now bear the pain of a speck of dust in your eye; how can you bear to "drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation?" when you "shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the

holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb ?” It is God with his own hand who will inflict the punishment. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God.” For such “shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” “God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth ; the Lord revengeth and is furious ; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked ; the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. Who can stand before his indignation ? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger ? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.” Such is that being from whose hand the sinner is to receive his final destiny.

And this punishment will come suddenly and unexpectedly. The same breath which pronounces the sinner’s separation from all his carnal delights, sends him away into everlasting burning. “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.” Sudden, indeed, then, will be your destruction. “For when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them.” When the man, who

had resolved to pull down his barns and build greater, was singing a requiem to his soul, then on that very night his glory departed and his misery came. Christ will come suddenly, "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." The word has already gone forth, "So I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest."

And now, reader, art thou still asleep? O, awake then, without delay. We cannot tell but your stupidity may provoke God to leave you, and never give you another warning. We know not but he may soon say, Let no fruit grow on this barren sinner any more. How will your spirit fail within you, when you hear the dreadful sentence pronounced? Now, if you awake in time and flee to Christ, you may avoid this fearful doom. O, then, hasten your escape, before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the day of the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you.

PART II.

MAN'S RECOVERY BY FAITH IN CHRIST, OR, THE CONVICTED SINNER'S CASE AND CURE

ACTS xvi. 29—31.—“Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas : and brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

CHAPTER I.

THE JAILER'S QUESTION CONSIDERED.

IN the former part of this treatise, it was remarked, that there are three questions in which man is principally concerned, namely : “What have I done ?” “What must I do to be saved ?” “What shall I render to the Lord ?” The first of these questions has already been considered ; we now come to the second, which was the question taken by the terrified jailer of Philippi.

From this question of the jailer we may lay down the proposition : *That a sinner, really convinced of sin and its consequences, will, with serious concern, put the question, What*

must I do to be saved? This was the first effect of conviction with the jailer; and so it was with those awakened on the day of pentecost.

I. But before discussing this proposition, a few things may be premised to prepare the way.

First. Conviction of sin is that clear view which the Holy Spirit gives to sinners of sin and its consequences, in their nature and necessary connection. Unconvinced sinners discover sin only in the twilight of reason, education, or the external dispensation of the word; and therefore they are not affected by it; nor do they see any peculiar deformity in it. But when the Holy Spirit pours sufficient light upon the soul, sin appears in its exceeding sinfulness; and misery, its deserved and necessary consequence, is awfully aggravated by the dread of avenging wrath. The convicted sinner sees that God has linked sin and hell inseparably together. The Holy Spirit not only shows him the impossibility of separating guilt and its punishment, not only tells him, as Nathan in the parable did David, that a certain man has sinned, but applies the parable, and says, "Thou art the man."

Second. Convictions are various in degree,

continuance, and results. Upon some they come like the faint rays of twilight; upon others, like the full beams of the noonday sun, shining in its strength. Some discover a few sins; others, many. Light seems to break in upon some like a flash of lightning; and is almost as soon gone. Not, however, that any particular degree of conviction is necessary to conversion, or that conviction is always followed by faith; for those who seem to have faint convictions are sometimes converted, while persons who suffer those that are most frequent, often return to a state of indifference. Some wear off their convictions, whether they are more or less deep, and others do not; some lose them in despair; and some in the opiate of a false remedy. Nor do we maintain that all must be a long time under conviction, before they can believe. The jailer believed immediately, and so may others. If convictions continue a long time, as is often the case before conversion, it is not because a long time in the nature of the case is necessary, but because the rebellious heart refuses, till after a long struggle, to comply with the terms of the Gospel.

Convictions are followed by various consequences. Faint discoveries of sin, whether occasioned by awakening providences, or other

means, usually cause some faint desires for safety in Christ. If they proceed farther than this, it is only to produce a few good resolutions, which are soon forgotten. Brilliant flashes of light often dart into the minds of men, and suddenly disappear without effect. It is with them as with a man suddenly awakened from sleep by a peal of thunder; he starts up before he is fully awake; the light, unexpectedly enabling him only for an instant to see the things about him, fills his mind with great confusion; but soon the light is gone, and the sound has ceased; his agitation subsides, and the softness of his bed invites him to fresh repose. And so men hear the thunderings of the law in the preaching of the word; this often occasions a transient terror, or a half-felt cry for mercy; but before you are aware of it, they are again asleep. It has happened unto them according to the true proverb: "The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Thus ends the religion of many who are at times a little concerned for their souls. No degree of conviction can change the heart. We naturally seek relief from pain; and if convictions are not too deep

and clear, we are not wanting in means to banish them from the mind.

II. Let us now inquire what that salvation is, about which the awakened sinner is so anxious. Salvation, as every one knows, is deliverance from danger or evil. But as used in the Scriptures, it means more than this; it signifies deliverance from sin and hell, and the final enjoyment of God in a future state, through the mediation of Christ. In other words, salvation includes freedom from sin, and a title to life. Hence the redeemed of the Lord are called "heirs of salvation." The question of the jailer, then, includes two others.

First. It includes the question, "What shall I do to obtain freedom from sin?" The sinner sees that sin threatens his destruction, and must be pardoned, or there can be no salvation. Pardon and salvation are plainly linked together in the Scriptures. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

This is the genuine language of conviction of sin. The sinner is willing to have pardon on any terms.

Second. The other question alluded to is, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? Pardon of sin, or freedom from wrath, first occurs to the awakened sinner, as the object of desire; but he wishes more than this. A rebel might be pardoned, and never made a favourite. Salvation would be incomplete without eternal life. God not only pardons sinners, but gives them gracious acceptance with him, and adoption into his family. "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." Awakened sinners always seek for some righteousness, with which they may appear before God, sensible that mere pardon of sin cannot alone do it. This was the case with the Jews; for, "being ignorant of God's righteousness," they went about "to establish their own righteousness;" they felt their need, but were mistaken as to the means of supplying it. A man convicted of sin, in a word, is one who is persuaded of a future state, and that the things of this world cannot insure happiness; therefore the question, "What must I do to be saved?" is equiva-

lent to asking, What must I do to be happy? Now his distress arises from an apprehension of the inconsistency between happiness and unpardoned sin. But mere pardon gives no man a title to happiness. Innocence in Adam did not give him a title to heaven. Eternal life was to be the reward of a course of obedience. Besides, mere pardon of sin does not make a man meet for "the inheritance of the saints in light;" or communion and intercourse with God. Truly there can be no communion between the holy nature of God and the sinful nature of man, and pardon does not change the nature of the person pardoned. Three things, then, are included in the inquiry after salvation; How shall I obtain the pardon of sin? How shall I secure a title to heaven? and, How shall I be made meet for "the inheritance of the saints in light?" The inquiring soul must have these inquiries answered, or there cannot be security or happiness.

III. But what is the nature of that concern, which results from conviction of sin?

First. To be concerned about salvation implies dissatisfaction with all other enjoyments, so long as the soul is in the dark about this. The accomplishment of earthly wishes

can never calm the fears of an awakened conscience. In the words of Haman, we may say of riches, honours, and pleasures, "yet all this availeth me nothing," so long as I am in uncertainty about salvation. What are the riches, and honours, and pleasures of this world to a dying man? So it was with the jailer. A moment before he was so anxious about the prisoners, as to be on the point of committing suicide, for fear of their escape; but suddenly this concern all left him; though the prison doors were open, he appears to have made no provision for securing them; nor does he seem to have received any satisfaction from hearing that they were safe.

Second. This concern implies also an earnest desire after salvation. When the thoughts are arrested by sin and misery, the mind refuses application to any thing but the means of escape. Whatever importance other things claim, this demands immediate attention. Like one in a besieged city, into whose walls the enemy has already made a breach, the man regards his present exigence; for if the enemy once enter, and sack, and destroy the city, all endeavours to save it will then come too late. It would be madness to attend to other matters; the breach must first be stopped, or

the enemy pacified, or the city is soon lost. So the awakened sinner knows, that if the wrath of God overtake him, ruin is inevitable. This posture of the mind keeps apprehension awake, and as the alarm increases, so does the desire for deliverance without delay. The possibility of escape excites hope of finding the way of safety. And as apprehensions of coming wrath fill the soul with terror, and a sense of sin with grief and shame, the bare possibility of deliverance is enough to awaken the most intense anxiety to obtain it.

Third. This inward frame of mind, just described, will manifest itself. It will show itself in words. Words are indications of thought; and when the mind is deeply concerned, especially for any thing so important as salvation, the thoughts naturally seek vent in words. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." So it was with the jailer; that which lay nearest his heart was the first to be expressed in words. But especially will there be the use of means to escape what is feared and secure what is desired. Perhaps the inward feeling will manifest itself more by this than by words. The jailer immediately went to the Apostles, and sought

direction from them. Probably he had learned what the possessed damsel cried out, that they were "the servants of the Most High God," who made it their business to show men the way of salvation; and this made him hasten to them as the most suitable persons to show him what to do to be saved. And when, as in this case, the anxiety becomes intense, it will produce intense application to the use of means. True, men may cry for mercy with their lips, while the heart continues unaffected as before; but if the heart be really moved, and the man really feel his danger, he will bestir himself to find a way of escape. The half-awakened man may say, "There is a lion in the way, and I shall be slain in the streets;" he may have a thousand trifling difficulties to prevent his acting; but one who lays salvation seriously to heart will use means and surmount obstacles to obtain relief. The jailer did not hesitate, though he had much reason to fear as to the success of his attempt. What! he might have said within himself, will these men, whom a few hours ago I bound in chains, and rudely thrust into the inner prison, be so kind and forgiving as to help me, when they have a fair opportunity to take ven-

geance on me, and make their escape from confinement besides ! But wrath pursued him so closely that he durst not delay ; he hazards an experiment, whatever might be the result. Sinners truly awakened will exclaim, like the lepers, “ Why sit we here until we die ? ” To sit still would be inevitable death ; and an unsuccessful attempt to find safety could be no more than death.

Fourth. Again, this concern will put the soul in an active and waiting posture, ready to comply with any injunction without delay. There is no hesitating to dispute about the terms of salvation, but any possible terms are readily accepted. The jailer applied to Paul and Silas, not to make terms, but to accept them, as soon as stated. As if he had said, I have no scruples as to any thing you enjoin upon me ; speak what you will in the name of the Lord, and I readily comply.

IV. The next inquiry is, Why does an awakened sinner thus lay salvation seriously to heart ? So strong a desire of self-preservation is implanted in the mind of man, that he can as easily cease to be as cease to desire it. “ For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it.” And the necessary consequence of this desire, is to fill us

with dread of that which appears hurtful to nature. That which threatens our ruin we view with abhorrence. Hence death is called the king of terrors, because it threatens nature, not with alterations more or less important, as the case may be, but with entire dissolution. Any thing is more or less terrible, according as it has more or less of death in it. And by the light which is let into the soul of the awakened sinner, he sees the death of deaths, eternal wrath, ready to ruin him forever. It is this sight of impending ruin which fills the awakened sinner with anguish; and, while the whole man, soul and body, is seen to be in the greatest of all possible danger, all the powers will not fail to be exercised for deliverance.

CHAPTER II.

PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT OF THE SUBJECT.

SECTION I. *The reader put upon trial to ascertain whether he is convinced of sin or not.—*

I. Unless you know whether you have been convinced of sin or not, you cannot know whether or not you have been profited by the foregoing considerations. You are made either better or worse by the perusal; for, "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." It is a matter of vast importance, then, that you know your own case. Nor is it enough to have those general notions of sin which persons entertain from custom or education; there must be a work of the heart, a personal work, or it is insufficient.

We may set aside all profane persons, profane swearers, drunkards, liars, whoremongers,

and thieves, and the like, as not concerned in this trial; for such persons are doubtless without genuine convictions of sin. So far from being concerned to obtain salvation, they do all in their power to make damnation sure. As their "judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not," so their condemnation will be just, for they run with open eyes into manifest ruin. While they know "that they which commit such things are worthy of death," they themselves "not only do the same things, but have pleasure in them that do them."

But besides these notorious sinners, there are others who are no less strangers to sound conviction, but the proof in their case is more difficult. Some of these profess to be convicted of sin. Have you, then, reader, felt more anxiety about salvation than any thing else? Can you be satisfied with other things while in utter uncertainty about your soul? You say you are convinced of sin; but could we know all your thoughts, what would these testify that you are most concerned about? What thoughts do you choose? those about the body or the soul? Are you more concerned to make a figure in the world, or to prepare for heaven? Do you not spend days and weeks together, without con-

cern for the soul? If you ordinarily choose to think of other things, it shows that other things are your principal concern. You cannot but have the thoughts most occupied with that which lies nearest the heart.

Again, I ask, what are your desires? Man is sensible that he is needy, and is ever longing either for fancied or real good. Now, what is your desire? Is it salvation? Is it Christ? Perhaps you never have such desires, except in sickness and the fear of death; and even then it is principally a desire to be free from death, and to live a little longer. Is your heart ever affected in view of salvation? Have you any fears of falling short of it? Concern never fails to set the heart at work. Do you ever taste God's anger in the threatenings of the law? Do you ever feel any shame for sin in your heart? If you have nothing of all this, you can have no true conviction of sin.

Upon what topics are you most ready to converse? Do you ever speak on the subject of salvation, unless it be to object, or cavil at the terms or doctrines of it? Talk not of accommodating yourself to the company you are in; for if this were necessary, you can easily find the company of those who would willingly talk of heaven. Are you never in company where

you may lead the conversation? Do you or not ever grow weary of the company that converses upon heavenly and divine things? If you were really concerned, it would be a restraint upon you to be kept from talking upon these things.

But do you use the means of salvation? A drowning man will surely struggle to save himself; and so will a convinced sinner. Is there not, then, a lie in the mouth of him who says he is anxious for his soul, and yet makes no effort to secure its salvation?

II. But let us descend to a few particulars. The means of salvation are of three sorts, secret, private, and public. Attend to a few questions in reference to each.

First. *Secret*.—I shall name only secret reading of the Scriptures and prayer. Do you neglect prayer in secret? Can you rise in the morning, and go to your work without bowing the knee to God? If so, you cannot have anxiety for your soul. Are you anxious to ascertain the success of your prayers, if indeed you do pray? Saints mentioned in the Bible were anxious to know the success and acceptance of their prayers. Are your secret prayers confined to stated times, as morning and evening, or do you often breathe out your desires to God

in ejaculations? These are the genuine effect of concern for the soul. Not, however, the forms frequently employed, such as "God save us," "The Lord deliver us," &c.; these neither manifest much concern for the soul, nor due reverence to God. As these expressions are often used, they are rather violations of the third command than expressions of reverence to God. By ejaculations are meant affectionate and reverent desires sent up to God for his grace; and very few who love the Lord can be strangers to them. Do you neglect to read the word of God, or have it read to you, if you cannot read yourself? You cannot be very desirous to know the way of life, if you do not read the only book which can teach you that way. Do you give heed to the word of God when you read it? Are you affected by it? Is it your endeavour to do what is commanded in the Scriptures? If not, then you are deceiving yourself, your pretensions are vain.

Second. *Private duties*, or means of salvation. This concern about salvation will make those who have families faithful in family religion, and careful to have all the household present at family worship and instruction. It will make them anxious, also, to know the success of these duties. But if you are indifferent in

these matters, you are, to say the least, in a dangerous condition. Take warning, therefore, from the words of the prophet: "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name."

Third. *Public means of grace.*—Anxiety for the soul will manifest itself in these. A man in great danger will seize upon any thing which gives him the hope of safety. He will rejoice if he find that his case is not hopeless. Now, is this the case with you? Do you with satisfaction embrace opportunities for enjoying ordinances? If not, you are deceiving yourself. I ask once more, will trifling difficulties make you lay aside the thoughts and the means of salvation? One who knows his sin and misery is not easily disheartened; for he sees nothing so terrible as the displeasure of God, and hears of no enjoyment so much to be desired as that of salvation.

SECTION II. *Address to the Unconvinced.*—If you are not yet convinced of sin, it must be because you have not heeded what has been said, or because you have not believed it, or because you have fled to some false refuge.

First. I speak first to those who have not paid attention to what has been said. If you give no heed to the truth, if you will not even listen to it, it is no wonder that you are not affected by it. But do you thus requite the Lord? Has he condescended to send his servants to tell you the way of life, and will you not give them a hearing? How would an earthly ruler bear such treatment? You have reason to wonder that you have not before this been cast into hell. God has commanded you to "take heed what ye hear," and "how ye hear;" and he will not suffer his commands to be slighted with impunity. It may be with you as with the people in the time of Ezekiel; they heard the word from the prophet, but would not regard it. They came indeed to him under the pretence of inquiring for the word of the Lord, but came with wicked and rebellious hearts, and therefore regarded it not. God threatens to answer them, not by the prophet, but by himself. "For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire concerning me; I the Lord will answer him by myself;

and I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people;" as if he had said, I will answer them no more in words; I will answer them by deeds, and those not of mercy, but of judgment.

Second. To those who, through unbelief of what has been said, are not convinced. Unbelief is represented in the Bible as an awful sin; indeed it is the sin of sins, including every thing hateful to God and destructive to the souls of men. Now, in your unbelief you have not refused the testimony of man, but the testimony of God, who cannot lie; and he who believes not the testimony of God makes him a liar. Your sin and misery have been set before you in the light of God's word, and therefore you close your eyes against the clear light of the divine declarations. Beware of shutting your eyes against the light; beware of trifling with God's truth; beware of disliking to retain God in your knowledge, lest you be given up "to do those things which are not convenient;" beware of not receiving the love of the truth, lest God send you strong delusion, and you be left to believe a lie; and be damned for not believing the truth, but having pleasure in

unrighteousness. 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12. Beware lest you be given up to Satan, the god of this world, to be led captive at his will. In the former part of this treatise, testimony was brought from heaven, earth, and hell, to prove that man has "sinned, and come short of the glory of God." I know of but one witness more, and that is sense; and beware that sense, even woful *experience* of misery, do not convince you of the truth, when too late to save you. If you never believe in this life, in the next you will be stripped of every delusion, and be left no more room for doubt.

Third. There is another sort of persons, who flee to some false refuge, to evade the force of truth. We have laid your case before you, as it is described in the word of God. We have shown, by incontestible proof, that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." We have shown that all are equally concerned in this sad truth. Whence, then, this security? Why so little fear of the woes of the second death? But men have a singular ingenuity in evading the force of divine truth, when pressed upon the conscience; I shall therefore lay open some of the defences behind which men take shelter to avoid conviction of sin.

There are some hearers of the Gospel who acknowledge the truth that they are sinners. Even if we say, as Nathan did to David, Thou art the man, or thou art the woman who hast sinned, and art in danger of eternal wrath; the sinner answers, All this is very true; I have sinned, and, God be merciful to us, we have all sinned; I hope God will be merciful to me. Thus slightly is the wound healed. This is the false refuge to which you flee. You say that God is merciful. Very true, he is so. But although he is merciful, he has told us that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." But you say you hope to be among the few who will find mercy; I fear you will not. Now, which stand on the better ground, *your* hopes or *my* fears? I can give good reason for my fears, but I doubt whether you can of your hopes. The few who are saved are penitent sinners, who have accepted of Christ on the terms of the Gospel. Now, what is the ground of your hopes? You say you cannot think that God will be so severe as to damn you; but why is it severe in your case more than in that of others, who, like you, are not penitent believers? In a word, is it cruelty to damn you who have innumerable sins,

when God thought it not cruel to send so many angels to hell for one sin? Is it unjust to punish you who have neglected the means of grace, when others have been punished who never had them? We have no reason to doubt that there are multitudes in hell, who have been ruined by such presumptuous hopes of mercy.

Others, when driven from this defence, will say, that they are in no danger, for they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is true, that those who really believe are in no danger. But are you sure that you believe? The foolish virgins in the parable thought themselves believers, and perhaps went farther than you pretend to go. They had professions, and they had lamps. But no sooner did they attempt to trim their lamps on the approach of the bridegroom, than they were convinced of their want of oil, and went to obtain a supply; but were forever shut out from the presence of the Lord. Now, how can you pretend to believe, when you fall behind many who have perished? There are some who tell us they believe, and yet they are drunkards, profane swearers, scoffers at religion, haters of better persons than themselves, ridiculing them, and pronouncing them hypocrites. Belief, or faith, "works by

love ;” it is a grace that purifies the heart, and reforms the life. “ Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works,” says the Apostle. Still you say you believe. But when did you believe? You will reply, always. You think, then, you were born a believer ; and thus you are proof against yourself that to this day you have never believed at all.

Others shelter themselves under the fig-leaf of their own blameless life. They say they hope all is well ; they never did anybody any harm ; and therefore they never feared the wrath of God. You never injured any one ! But you have injured your Maker, and therefore you must perish. But you still say you never injured any man. You know not what you say. You owe a debt of love to every one with whom you have any intercourse or connection, to say nothing of the love you owe to the whole human family. “ Love one another, for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” Now, he who has never shown his love to others in a serious concern for their salvation, withholds from them what is their unquestionable due ; and surely he who was never concerned for his own soul, was never really concerned for that of others. Say no

more, then, that you never injured any one. Didst thou never see thy brother sin without reproving him? Many persons, like thee, will see their own children and servants commit iniquity, and not reprove them. And is not this a real injury to the persons you ought to have reproved? "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." With what confidence can you say you have injured no man, when by your impenitent life you have been drawing down the wrath of heaven upon yourself, and by your example, if not by your words, have been encouraging others to neglect their souls?

Others, when reminded of their sins, take refuge behind their church-privileges, as if these could shelter them from the wrath of God. Thus it was with many in the days of the prophet Jeremiah. They were guilty of theft, murder, adultery, perjury, and of burning incense to Baal. And when the prophet was sent to rebuke them, they cried out, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." Is it not so with you? It is not ordinances alone, but improving them, that will save you. To lean

upon them, instead of the Saviour, is the worst misimprovement of them.

Others betake themselves to their works. Like the Pharisee who thanked God that he was not as other men, they stop the mouth of conscience with an enumeration of the performances in which they imagine they excel others. True, they admit that, in common with others, they have sinned; but, they say, they fast and pray, and to do good and to communicate, they forget not; and so they think they are safe. Thus, they prefer their own miserable hiding-place to God's impregnable city of refuge; the home-spun rags of their own, to the heaven-wrought, imperishable robe of a Saviour's righteousness! To lean upon duties in this manner, is to say to the work of your hands, Ye are our gods.

Another class of persons will take shelter under their good resolutions, and thus stifle conviction of sin. Like Felix, they resolve to attend to their souls at some convenient season; and for this convenient season, which, alas! never arrives, they will put off all their concern for salvation. But can there be any business so important as to deserve to take the place of that of the soul? Is there any hazard like that of perdition? and any mercy like that

of salvation from deserved wrath? Who is the better judge of the most convenient season, God or you? God has determined the present to be the fittest time. "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Very many who have resolved upon a more convenient season, have never seen that season arrive; and what is your assurance that it will be otherwise with you? You may be in hell, soul and body, before that season arrives.

There is another sort of persons who plead their ignorance in justification of their conduct. Though unconcerned, they fancy themselves safe, because they are ignorant. God, say they, may deal severely with others who are better informed; but I hope for mercy, because I know no better. O, the carnal and deceitful heart! Will God have mercy upon you because you are willing to be ignorant? Certainly not. "For it is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show no favour." Whose fault is your ignorance? Has not the light of the glorious Gospel shone clearly around you? Have not others acquired knowledge with the same means which you have neglected? This is an unfor-

tunate excuse; for ignorant people shall not be saved. "In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the condemnation of sinners, "that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Is not this the true reason of your ignorance? You cannot plead your want of time; for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the hearts, as well as the property of men, are in his hands; and he has told you that if you are first faithful to him, he will take care of you. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Besides, others, with as little time as you have, can take good care of their souls, and acquire knowledge. You probably waste as much time on trifles, or in doing nothing, as would be necessary, if well improved, to furnish you with all the knowledge you need. Thus you labour under a twofold evil; your voluntary ignorance renders you incapable of fully understanding what we say to you of your sin and danger; and you make that ignorance atone for your other faults. Your ignorance, therefore, is your sin, and not your excuse.

There is still another class of persons, who seek shelter from conviction, by comparing themselves with others. When appeals are made to their consciences, they will say, they are sure it will be no worse with them than with others; if they are lost, many others will be also; and surely the Lord will not send us all to perdition. But what if others do perish as well as you? Will the wailings and gnashing of teeth of lost souls be any comfort to you in hell? Will these not rather enhance your misery? Alas! you know not what you say. It is as much as to say, I will hazard the result, be it what it may. Are you willing to hazard eternal wrath? Can you dwell with "everlasting burnings?" Can you take comfort in "devouring fire?" I put the question, is there any thing whatever, that is worth seeking, and which you wish to make sure? If so, then I put it to your heart and conscience, whether any thing can be of equal importance with salvation? If you think there is, then I ask you, farther, can you carry it with you when you leave the world? Will any thing make up the loss, if you lose your soul? Finally, I ask, have you ever considered what it is to be a lost sinner in hell? I shall only refer you to Matt. xxv. 41. "Depart from me, ye cursed,

into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

SECTION III. *Address to those who are awakened.*—If the Lord has opened your eyes to see your sins, then bless his holy name for it. You were naturally as much inclined to sleep on as others; therefore bless the distinguishing mercy of God. Study to keep your eyes open; or rather give your heart without delay to the Saviour, and then your eyes will be opened indeed. If you shut them now, and lose your convictions, your slumbers may not be broken again, till broken by the loud wailings of everlasting despair. Endeavour to improve the discoveries you have made of sin; and seek to have your eyes farther opened. The more you see of sin, the more welcome will be the offers of mercy.

Would you indeed be saved? Then take the advice given to the jailer. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." To this answer of the Apostle to the jailer, your serious attention is invited in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III.

THE APOSTLE'S ANSWER TO THE JAILER CONSIDERED.

SECTION I. *The answer of the Apostle explained.*—The Gospel proposes its remedy, not to those who are well in their own eyes, but to those who see and feel their disease. Christ is offered to those who are sensible of their need of him. Hence, ministers of the Gospel begin their work with conviction of sin; for this alone prepares the way to receive Christ. When John the Baptist was sent to prepare for the coming of Christ, he began here: "Repent," said he, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." So it was with Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. Our Lord employed the same method in the conversion of Paul. The same have I attempted to do in dealing with you. I have laid sin before you; and now we enter upon the plan of relief, which is suited only to convinced sinners.

When the awakened man asked Paul and Silas what he must do, they answered him directly and plainly. They did not hold him in

suspense till they could capitulate with him for their own escape from prison. They, therefore, gave him the simplest direction possible: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Have faith in him; receive him, and rest upon him, and thou shalt be saved.

They gave him the highest possible encouragement to comply with their direction: "Thou shalt be saved, and thy house." The thing offered is the very thing he is seeking. Believe, and thou shalt be saved. He might be saved, but he must believe. Belief and salvation are inseparable. He was not told, that if he would abide in faith to the end, he should be saved, for this would have left him still trembling, lest he might after all be finally lost. He was told, that real belief rendered his salvation sure. He was farther encouraged by the promise that his family should be saved with him. Not that his faith would save them; they must believe for themselves, or they could not be saved. But this promise implied that his family would obtain some special advantages in order to their salvation. The promise was a covenant that they should be saved. The covenanted mercies are indeed many to the children of pious parents; and were it not for the criminal

neglect of parents to instruct their children in the fear of God, we should soon see a brighter day dawn upon the Church and the world.

SECTION II. *The convictions and feelings of the sinner immediately before believing.*—It is not to be supposed that the feelings and convictions of awakened sinners are the same in every case. On the contrary, there is a great diversity. The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. There are diversities of gifts, and diversities of operations. But as the Holy Spirit is the same in all cases, and as sin is sin, whenever and by whomsoever committed, there must be something common to all cases of genuine conviction. A general description, which is applicable to every variety of cases, may now be given. A description of the jailer's case is in point.

First. This convinced sinner is an ungodly man. It is only the ungodly that are to be saved by fleeing to and believing in Christ. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." None but the ungodly can have need of a Saviour; and those who do not see themselves to be such, will

never be persuaded to look to him for salvation.

Second. The convinced jailer saw himself obnoxious to the righteous judgment of God against sinners. He saw that death—the curse and penalty of the law—was justly pronounced against him. When the law proclaims, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die;” the sinner hears in that sentence his own doom, because he sees in it his own name. It is the doom of sin; and of sin he knows he is guilty. He is self-condemned.

Third. He utters not one murmur; his mouth is stopped. He knows that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good. He knows “that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.” He has sinned, and it cannot be concealed; he is guilty, and there is no excuse. He is “shut up under sin.” He is a criminal, who has such a view of his crimes, that he dares not attempt either to conceal or extenuate them; but subscribes to the truth of every thing charged upon him by the divine law and by his own conscience. He is an enemy to God, brought into such a strait that he can

neither fight nor flee. If he looks to himself, he sees an enemy in hopeless rebellion against heaven. If he looks to his own righteousness, it is as filthy rags. His former defences are now as a deceitful bow; and all the things upon which he once leaned are now as a broken reed. In short, in himself, he is poor, miserable, blind, helpless, and undone.

SECTION III. *Character and work of Christ.*
—A full account of the character and offices of Christ cannot here be given. It will be sufficient to glance at a few things which suit our present purpose.

I. The Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we are commanded to believe, is "Immanuel," that is, "God with us." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And in the fulness of time, this Word "was made flesh and dwelt among us;" even among men upon earth, who "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Now this discovery of Christ is extremely encouraging to a convinced sinner. It affords him no relief to tell him to believe in God; for he sees the holiness, justice, truth, and wisdom of God, all arrayed against him. Holiness

cannot countenance sin. The truth of God has become surety for the sinner's destruction; and justice declares this reasonable. Hence the sinner's terror. He dare not flee to God. Like Adam, he would rather attempt to hide himself from the divine presence. Tell the sinner to believe in such a Being, and he would probably reply, Can I believe in him, whose attributes all conspire, and justly, too, to seal my destruction? He has already told me what I am to expect at his hand. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." "God is a consuming fire," and I am as stubble before him. On the other hand, tell such a sinner to go to a man, a mere man, for help, and he instantly feels that the help of man is vain. "What," he would say, "are not all men involved in the same calamity with me? Shall I flee to a man like myself, to sustain for me the weight of deserved wrath, and to shield me from the dreadful blow of divine justice?" It is preposterous. Thus neither God nor man alone is suited to give the desired relief to a guilty, awakened sinner. But the union of God and man in Christ Jesus our Lord is exactly suited to give the sinner the desired relief. An awakened sinner will see three things in the person of Jesus Christ.

First. He will see Christ to be one who may be approached by him. He will feel that he cannot see God and live. Nay, such is the weakness of man since the fall, that even the sight of a created angel has made some of the most eminently holy men exceedingly fear and tremble. But there is not this dread of approaching one who, like ourselves, is clothed in flesh.

Second. The person of Christ, thus consisting of the divine and human nature united, appears eminently fitted for undertaking the work of reconciliation between offended God and offending man. He is equally interested in both parties. Being God, he fully knows what God demands of sinners; and being man, he knows what is man's condition and wants. In Christ, therefore, the sinner finds a "days-man," to whom he may go with confidence.

Third. He sees also, in Christ Jesus, one who is touched with the feeling of his infirmities; and one who has wisdom and power to improve to our advantage his sense of our misery. "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh;" this the convinced sinner views with admiration. The divine seems brought down to the human nature, and the human elevated to the divine,

affording at once the assurance of power to deliver and of willingness to save, while justice and mercy, both fully satisfied and united in delightful harmony, concur in the sinner's salvation.

II. The Lord Jesus Christ is clothed with a threefold office, for the benefit of believers.

First. Christ is a Prophet. He was predicted as such by Moses; "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren." "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." That this Prophet is indeed the Lord Jesus Christ, is proved by the words of Peter; Acts iii. 22; where this prophecy of Moses is repeated and applied to Christ. The passage contains a full account of Christ's prophetical office. There is his call to that office; "I will raise them up a Prophet:" that is, I will call one, and set him apart for the work. The passage also describes his fitness for the work: "I will put my words in his mouth." It shows what his work is;

“He shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.” We see, also, to whom this prophet is sent; they are sinners, who are sensible that they cannot approach God without a mediator, and live. This circumstance made them cry out: “Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.” We may farther see that the design of Christ’s prophetical office was, to satisfy the desires and necessities of convinced sinners. This will be evident, if we examine Deut. xviii. 15, 16. The Lord promises Christ to be a Prophet; and then adds, that it was according to their desire in Horeb. We may notice, finally, the qualifications of this Prophet, who was promised to Israel. He was to be one of themselves; and one who would faithfully declare to them all that the Lord commanded him.

Second. The Lord Jesus Christ is “a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedec,” God having made him such by an oath. Not to discourse at large upon this office, we may notice two things, which are peculiarly suited to the sinner’s wants; namely, *oblation* and *intercession*. The first is the foundation of the second.

The being to whom he offers sacrifice, or

oblation, and with whom he intercedes, is God only, the just God, who has declared that he "will by no means clear the guilty." Before sin entered the world, there was no place for sacrifice. Under the first covenant there was no sacrifice required; Adam had whatever was needful for his happiness without it. But sin cut him off from expecting the blessings of the first covenant, and threatened him with destruction from the presence of the Lord, unless there could be some one to interpose as priest in his behalf.

The persons for whom he offers sacrifice are therefore sinners.

This shows us what must be the character of the interposing priest; he must be acceptable to God. "Such an high-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." One who was himself a sinner could answer no purpose as prevailing intercessor between God and sinners. Again, he must be capable of being affected with the feeling of our infirmities, that he might have compassion upon us. "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: For that he himself

hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." "For we have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." In fine, he must be called of God, as was Aaron; for no man can take to himself this office. Now in Christ, and him alone, are found all these qualifications. He is "the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession."

But what sacrifice does this High-Priest of our profession offer? Some offering is indispensable. "For every high-priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer." Another passage from the epistle to the Hebrews will show what this sacrifice is. "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God?" The sacrifice which he offered, then, was the sacrifice of himself.

What has now been said shows us the condition of man. He has sinned, and by sin

provoked God to wrath. Incensed justice, as it were, seizes him, binds him, as was Isaac, and lifts the knife, to strike the blow. In this situation, no prayers, no tears, nor any thing the sinner can do, will avail. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not." Christ, being made a priest, now, by virtue of his office, pleads for the sinner, and offers, in his stead, to suffer what divine justice was about to inflict upon him. Justice accepts of the Lamb of the Lord's providing—the Lord Jesus Christ—and sets the sinner free, but slays the sacrifice. Between God and the sinner there is now reconciliation. The victim has suffered, and the charge against the sinner is removed. This sacrifice, being of infinitely more value than the sinner, purchases for him many favours, which his High-Priest takes care to have bestowed upon him; that is, he intercedes for him, taking care, if we may so speak, that he may receive all the blessings purchased by the sacrifice.

Third. The Lord Jesus Christ is also a king. He was foretold as such in prophecy. "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." The angel that appeared to Mary thus spoke of him: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord

God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever and ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." He calls himself a king. "My kingdom," says he, "is not of this world." And for his adherence to this, the Jews crucified him.

In regard to his kingly office, I have room only for a few hints, such as suit our present purpose.—First. In virtue of this office he has power to enact all the laws which are necessary for the good of his subjects.—Second. He has power to reduce to obedience all who belong to his kingdom. "The Lord said unto my Lord—thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." If they rebel, he can bring them into subjection.—Third. He can protect them against all their enemies. "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us."—Fourth. He has power to conquer all his enemies. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." He can subdue all things unto himself. "According to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He is "head over all things to the church."

And whatever is needful for the church he will supply.

III. In Christ the convinced sinner may find relief against a threefold evil. First. He finds himself extremely ignorant, as to the mind and will of God. He knows not what to do. To sit still is ruinous; and if he move, it may be in the wrong direction. In this difficulty he may find relief in Christ's prophetic office; for in virtue of this office, the sinner is translated out of darkness into marvellous light. Whether there were purposes of mercy and grace or not, in the divine mind, it could not have been known, had not Christ revealed it. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Second. The awakened sinner is burdened with guilt, against which nothing but Christ's priestly office can afford relief. For there is no way of purging the conscience from dead works, but by the application of the blood of Christ, who, "through the eternal Spirit," offered himself for this very purpose. Third. In Christ there is a relief from the power of sin. Sin insults and enslaves the sinner; and he cannot break away from its merciless dominion, but in the strength of Christ.

IV. The Lord Jesus Christ is one in whom the doubting sinner finds a threefold tormenting scruple removed. First. When the sinner begins to feel the burden of his sins, he asks where he can find one able to undertake for him. He sees mountains in his way, which he cannot remove. He knows no one in heaven or earth, to whom he may apply for relief. If man were willing, his strength is wholly incompetent. In Christ he finds the needed strength. "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people." He is the Lord in whom is everlasting strength. Second. When the sinner hears of one able to relieve him, he still may doubt whether that ability will be employed in his behalf. Many, when Christ was on earth, came to him to be healed of diseases, without doubting his ability to heal them, but fearing that he would not be willing. The leper cried, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Now, in the scriptural view of Christ our King, this difficulty is removed. As he is the Lord, mighty to save, having all power in heaven and in earth; so he is Jesus, willing to save, designing to employ his power for this end. Third. There may still be another doubt in the mind of a

sinner ; he may fear the Father's unwillingness to grant the Son a suitable commission for his work. But his fears on this ground may soon be removed ; for Christ is one whom the Father has sealed, anointed, and set apart for that very work. He is the beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleased, and who has power to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him.

V. Christ removes a threefold obstruction to the sinner's salvation, arising from the character and attributes of God. First. Justice declared that the sinner was worthy of death. But he is now able to answer, "In Christ I have suffered the penalty." Second. Holiness declares that nothing impure shall have admittance. But Christ answers, I have power to purge them by the Spirit. Third. But it still remains to show this to the sinner. Christ, therefore, becomes the messenger to impart the welcome news, that all these obstacles are removed.

VI. Christ furnishes the sinner with a threefold defence against his adversaries. First. Satan charges him with things which he cannot deny ; but Christ furnishes an answer to them all. Second. Satan lays deep plots against him, which he cannot discover ; but

Christ gives him wisdom to escape the snares, and to know the depths of Satan. Third. These adversaries fall upon him with a force which he cannot resist; but he is made more than a conqueror through Christ strengthening him.

VII. That there may be nothing wanting, the Lord Jesus Christ can satisfy the mind, the conscience, and the heart. He fills the mind with light; he pacifies the conscience; and presents an object suited to the holiest desires of a renewed heart. As a prophet, he opens blind eyes, and pours light upon dark minds. As a priest, he stops the mouth of an awakened and accusing conscience. As a king, he bestows what is sufficient to content the heart, even himself, and every other needed blessing.

For all these glorious purposes is Christ offered in the Gospel to all who need him. He invites the weary and heavy laden to mansions of everlasting rest. He is proposed in the everlasting Gospel as the object of faith, on whom the sinner is to believe in order to salvation.

SECTION IV. *Faith, or believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, considered.*—The duty of believ-

ing, or of exercising faith, is the foundation of all duties. Hence its nature and evidences are set forth in the sacred Scriptures in a multitude of passages, and by a very great variety of illustrations and forms of expression.

First. Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is *looking to him*. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else." In the Epistle to the Hebrews is a similar passage: "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Perhaps here is an allusion to the brazen serpent, which Moses erected on a pole in the wilderness, to which those who were bitten with the fiery serpents were to look, and be healed. He who is led to believe, then, is one who feels the smart of the sting of sin. And if he wish to be cured of its deadly venom, he must look to Jesus, the author and finisher of faith. As it was with those stung by the fiery serpents, if he will not look he cannot live. A sense of present pain, and an apprehension of future danger, give rise to faith. The sinner looks to Christ as God, who has made provision for salvation. He looks to him as ordained by divine appointment for this very end. He looks to him, and trusts in him

alone, as an all-sufficient remedy for the malady of sin.

Second. To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, *is to come to him*. So faith is expressed both in the Old and New Testament. Surely shall one say: "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come." "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." To this the people answer: "Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God." And by the same expression is faith spoken of in the New Testament. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Here are several things to be noticed in regard to this manner of expressing faith. First. Persons, before believing, are at a distance from God. Like the prodigal, they are away from their father's house in a far country, hungry, thirsty, and destitute. Second. On the sinner's part it is a painful conviction of present want and future wrath, which occasions his believing. He is hungry, and without food;

he is thirsty, and can find no drink. The starving prodigal would have been glad of the meanest pittance of food; but where he then was, he could not have it. So it is with sinners. When the Lord opens their eyes to see their condition, they find themselves far away from Christ; and then a pressing sense of want follows, which is the spring of their turning towards the Lord. On the Lord's part, that which causes their coming to him, is his calling and drawing them: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "No man can come to me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him."

"Third. To believe in Christ is, *to flee, to run to him*. He is "a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." Here we may have "a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." The awakened sinner is like the manslayer of old; he was nowhere safe but in the city of refuge. The avenger of blood had a commission to slay him, if found out of this city. So justice has a warrant against sinners, and pursues them. Death, the officer and executioner, closely follows the guilty, and executes his commission, if he overtake them

before they reach the city of refuge, the Lord Jesus.

Fourth. To believe in Christ is *to cast our burden upon the Lord*. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." Sin is the heaviest of burdens. The Psalmist found it so. "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me." They were so heavy a burden to the fallen angels, as to press them down into the bottomless pit. They have always been so heavy, that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Even those who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, and so have this burden greatly lightened, while "in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." Nothing but a Saviour can remove this burden.

Fifth. To believe is *to put on the Lord Jesus Christ*. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Man by nature, like Adam, is naked. The fig-leaf garments of his own righteousness will not shelter him from the storm of deserved wrath. No robe can cover him, but that of a Saviour's righteousness. And to believe is to put on Christ for righteousness. Without Christ, man has no ornament, no covering. He needs to go to Christ for white raiment of

beauty and glory. This, then, is faith ; to see in Christ our ornament, and our covering, and defence. These hide the deformity of sin, and satisfy the soul.

Sixth. To believe is *to receive Christ*. “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” Sometimes the same is expressed in the idea of having sin remitted through faith in Christ. “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” And again: “We also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement,” or reconciliation. Here we see, that one who is to believe is one who needs Christ, and needs righteousness ; one who is condemned to die, and wants pardon. And in receiving Christ, he receives all his benefits, for they are inseparable. Here, too, we see what faith is ; it is the acceptance of Christ’s gifts, for the end for which they are offered.

Seventh. To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, is *to lean upon him ; to stay ourselves upon him*. “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved ?” “Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obey-

eth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Here, too, as before, we see what the sinner's state is before believing. He is oppressed with a burden which he cannot bear; he is facing a storm which he cannot endure. He must have a support, or he will fall; and if he fall, he will be dashed in pieces. He is on the brink of the pit, ready to plunge into its fiery abyss; and if his foot once slide, there will be no deliverance. He sees his peril, and sees that Christ is able to support and save him. He leans upon his Saviour, and finds the expected relief.

Eighth. To believe in Christ, is *to lay hold of him; to take hold of his strength*. "Let him lay hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." "Thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant." In the New Testament it is called apprehending Christ. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus." In another passage, we are said "to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Like

Peter attempting to walk upon the sea, the sinner is ready to sink and perish; but he lays hold on Christ, and thus is saved.

There are many other ways of expressing faith employed in the Bible, such as cleaving to the Lord, submitting to the righteousness of God, and opening the door to Christ; but those already given will be sufficient for our present purpose.

SECTION V. *The nature of Faith continued.*

First. If we bear in mind what has been offered in the foregoing section, we shall not find it difficult to understand what is implied in the duty of believing. We can easily see that it implies a distinct understanding of sin and misery. The Israelite, bitten by the fiery serpents, knew his wound and his danger, before he looked to the remedy. The prodigal knew his want, before he thought of returning to his father's house. The manslayer understood his danger, before he fled to the city of refuge. The burdened sinner is sensible of the weight of sin, before the Lord relieves him of it. The sinner will never flee to Christ till he well knows the evil of sin.

This sense of sin and misery is also deep, as well as distinct. Many who live under the

Gospel, have the latter without the former. But in the mind of the believer, it has a deep root. It moreover affects his heart, and takes hold of his affections. Fear, grief, hatred, and revenge, take their turn in the soul; grief for the offence done to God; hatred against sin; and self-revenge for the folly of incurring the guilt of sin. Indeed, those who have never been affected on account of sin, are strangers to saving faith. Half-awakened sinners hope to have their wound cured, without applying in earnest to the great Physician. They stop short of believing, and employ some remedy less disagreeable to them than to lay aside their easily besetting sins. If their eye offend them, they will not pluck it out, and if their hand or foot offend them, they will not cut it off. They want salvation on their own terms. But with a deep and abiding sense of the guilt of sin, nothing but a saving work will satisfy. And this feeling must not only be presupposed to the first actings of faith, but will continue in some measure in the soul, during the whole life of faith on earth.

Second. Saving faith also implies some knowledge of Jesus Christ. Hence faith is sometimes called knowledge. "By his know-

ledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities;" that is, by the knowledge of him, or, in other words, by faith in him, shall my righteous servant justify many. And three things in particular must be known of Christ. First. The excellence of his person must be known. The eye of faith must fix on him; for him we receive; on him we lean; on him we stay ourselves; on him we cast our burdens. In order to do this, we must know who he is. We must know that he is God and man in one person; "God manifest in the flesh." Second. His power to save must be known; for we cannot have faith in him, or rely on him, without a knowledge of his sufficiency for his work. Therefore he must be known as "the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" as the Word made flesh, and dwelling among us. Third. His suitability to the sinner's case must be known. There may be fulness and sufficiency, without suitability. God manifest in the flesh is indeed sufficient to accomplish the work of our salvation; but in order to receive him, we must know that there is a way of conveyance, by which that fulness may become ours.

Third. Saving faith, or believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, implies some knowledge of the Gospel offer of Christ. It must be known that Christ and his benefits are offered freely. We must also know on what terms the offer is made. The followers of Christ are "the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Here are the terms; we must utterly abandon all confidence in the flesh; we must know that our prayers and tears cannot atone for our sin, or merit salvation; we are to rejoice in the Lord; we are to glory in him alone. We must serve God in the way of his own appointment, and in the strength of that Spirit, whose benefits Christ has purchased for the believer.

Fourth. Faith implies that the heart accepts of these terms. Strictly speaking, this is faith, and the things above mentioned are prerequisites and accompaniments of faith. To accept of these terms, or to receive Christ, implies three things. First. It implies a renunciation of all dependence on other things for salvation. Hence believers are said to have no confidence in the flesh; that is, they expect no relief from things upon which cor-

rupt nature is prone to rely. "Assur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods." "Truly in vain is salvation looked for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains." "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." To whom can we go but to the Lord, who has the words of eternal life? Second. It includes the assent of the will to the terms of the Gospel, as good and desirable. Seek not salvation from that which cannot save, have no confidence in the flesh, take freely whatever you need, and freely use what you receive; these are the terms; who that is not blind can refuse them? We can conceive nothing more reasonable, favourable, encouraging, and condescending than this. The terms are indeed worthy of the love, mercy, and wisdom of God. Third. It implies that the soul rests on Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Faith fixes on him alone. It has tried other things, and found them wanting. With confidence it rejoices and glories in Jesus Christ. It points the wounded conscience to a bleeding Saviour, and the accusing voice is hushed. In the robe of a Saviour's righteousness, the

believer finds a shelter from the thunders of Sinai, and his furniture for every good word and work.

SECTION VI. *Import of Salvation.*—I. Salvation implies three things. First. It implies deliverance from wrath. Sin deserves wrath; the jailer felt that it did; and therefore he fled for refuge, like one who runs for shelter, when the thundering clouds portend the near approach of a tempest. What must I do? “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Second. It implies a title to eternal life. The awakened man desires happiness; but how to secure it, he does not know. He fears that he shall never obtain it; this makes him quake, and inquire what he must do. The answer is, as before, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” He who believes God’s record of his Son, assents that God is true. “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath life.” Third. It implies a full possession of eternal life. What must I do? asks the trembling sinner. How can I secure the promised possession? “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Thus you

will be "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation;" "receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

II. Salvation has many important properties. A few will be described. First. It is a *great* salvation. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation." It is a great salvation in regard to its contrivance. There was much wisdom in contriving the world, but in the salvation of the church is to be seen "the *manifold* wisdom of God." Before the fall, divine mercy and grace had not been glorified. On every feature of creation, infinite wisdom and power were legible. Moral perfection was copied out in the nature of angels and the souls of men. It might then be seen, that God was transcendently glorious, holy, good, and bountiful; but we cannot trace the footsteps of mercy, till the world had been defaced by sin. Justice plunged the rebel angels into the pit of darkness; but in that transaction, mercy was not unveiled. Indeed, in reference to man, the door seemed closed against it by the threatening, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Here, then, both in the justice which condemns, and the mercy which spares, we may see that salvation is great in reference to its plan. What could be

more worthy of the Lawgiver, than to show that his law was suited to the ends of government, and to the honour of the Governor? The obedience of the Son of God proclaims, that it is man's honour to obey; the peace which flows from obedience, proves it to be for his interest; and pain, the consequence of sin, shows that no charge can be sustained against the laws and ways of God. What more suitable to him who had undertaken to protect his subjects, than to give proof that he could defeat the crafty plots, and crush the force of enemies? All this is conspicuously done in the salvation of the church. In the plan of salvation, God completed to us the exhibition of his attributes, honoured his law, and exposed the folly and weakness of his great enemy. And this also shows that, in reference to its author, salvation is great. All the persons of the glorious Trinity have their office in the work. The first proposal of it is from the love of the Father, the accomplishment of it is by the Son, and the application of it is by the Holy Spirit. The Son takes the "form of a servant," becomes the obedient and suffering victim, the vicarious offering for the sins of his people, and purchases redemption and all its blessings, not with silver and gold, which for such a purpose

are worthless, but with his own precious blood. God himself first announced to Adam that a Saviour would come; additional revelations were afterwards made; fresh beams of light from time to time were emitted upon the world, till the Sun of righteousness himself came with the effulgence of the Gospel.

This is a great salvation in reference to its provisions for deliverance from wrath, and admittance to glory. The stain of sin is so deep that nothing but the blood of Christ can wash it out. Sin, an inexorable tyrant, rules with a rod of iron, and binds his vassals in chains. What this tyranny is, the tragical history of the world affords melancholy evidence. We see families ruined in estate and happiness, their reputation blasted and their hopes blighted; we see interminable discords in neighbourhoods and communities; we see oppression, violence, and murder; we see kingdoms drenched in blood. From all this does salvation grant us final deliverance. It does more than this: it saves us from the wrath to come. It is salvation from the sting and the fear of death. It does still more: it not only frees the believer from the galling chains and the "filthy rags" of sin, but it places on his head a crown of life, and clothes him in robes

of righteousness and garments of salvation. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robes of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." Thus it gives to the slaves of Satan the "power to become the sons of God." It grants to the children of wrath the privilege to become "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." It puts believers under the mild dominion of grace. It gives them the indwelling of the Spirit, to overcome the power of indwelling sin. It brings them into a state of favour with God, sealing them by the Spirit unto the day of complete redemption. It brings them into the enjoyment of God's loving-kindness, which is better than life. It takes the vassals of Satan, and places them on a throne. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne;" there to enjoy a life of God, a life of promise in heaven, a life of happiness, a life of glory, and such a life forever and ever.

Second. This salvation is great; it not only delivers from all evil, and grants blessings of

infinite value; it is not only a complete salvation in every respect, but it is a *suitable* one. It is suitable to the sinner, because it is near. The sinner's case requires a speedy relief. Its advantages are near, and its offer is near. On God's part all things are now ready. The jailer obtained speedy relief, and so may others. The terms of this salvation are suitable to the sinner's case. He cannot purchase salvation, and therefore he must have it as a gift, if he have it at all. Its nature is suited to the sinner's wants. Does he need pardon? he may have it. Does he need repentance? he may have it. Does he need grace and mercy? these, too, he may freely have. The security it offers is suited to the sinner's desires. It is security, and that alone, which can satisfy him. And what security can be greater than God's covenant promise, confirmed by an oath? It puts believers in a sure possession of eternal blessings.

SECTION VII. *Certainty of salvation to true believers.*—First. The first argument for the certainty of the believer's salvation, is drawn from the immutability of the divine purposes. In all the controversies among Christians about divine decrees, scarcely any have ventured to allege that God has not determined the salva-

tion of believers. If all who believe will not be infallibly saved, it must be either because God changes his purposes, or because he falls short of accomplishing them. But the divine purposes must be unchangeable, because he is so himself. "I am the Lord, I change not." "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." And as God cannot change his purposes, so he cannot fall short of accomplishing them. And we have the sure word of God, that those who believe shall be saved." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Now the word and purpose of God must stand. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever." "The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" "None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" We thus have the purpose and promise of God. We have more than this: there is a covenant; this covenant has seals appended to it for its ratification; the Lord Jesus Christ is the surety of this covenant; the blessings of this covenant were purchased by the blood of the Son of

God; the purchase is made over by way of legacy to believers; this testament, being confirmed by the death of the testator, is unalterable; the Holy Spirit is left, if we may so speak, as executor of this will; and hence no believer can fail of salvation.

Second. We have another argument in the experience of believers. We may here lay down the proposition, that all believers at death attain the full possession of this great, complete, suitable, and eternal salvation. But without insisting on this, we maintain that believers, even in this life, have some experience of this salvation. We do not say that all have the same degree of it, or that all can give equally distinct accounts of their experience. But all may understand that salvation comprehends a deliverance from evil, and a grant of all that is good. All true believers have experience, that a gracious deliverance from wrath is begun. Before they gave their hearts to the Lord, they were brought to see destruction as it were before them, and they beheld it with "a fearful looking for of wrath and fiery indignation." While trembling on the verge of ruin, they discovered the Lord Jesus Christ. They saw his sufficiency, and understood the terms of safety.

They were pleased with the terms, and laid hold on Christ. At this stage of the believer's experience, he begins to find rest, in a greater or less degree. Deliverance, thus begun, is a pledge of full freedom. Nor is this all; the believer now experiences, that salvation from the dominion of sin is begun. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, makes him free from the law of sin and death. However great the diversity in different persons, every one in whom salvation is begun has some experience of this kind. And if there is deliverance from the power, there will be also from the pollution of sin; or there could be no confidence in approaching the throne of grace. Nor should we here forget to notice the experience of the freedom of Christ's subjects. The believer finds freedom in the service of God; it becomes easy, and, as it were, natural to him. He finds a refreshment in obedience; a beginning of that satisfaction with God's likeness, which is to be completed in heaven. He finds a beginning of heaven in his soul. All believers, in a greater or less degree, experience Christ as the hope of glory in their hearts. That these experiences are not oftener clearly discovered and comfortably enjoyed, must be attributed to the

unfaithfulness of believers. But whether the experience be more or less clear and satisfactory, if it exist at all, it is the beginning of eternal salvation.

We know that the believer does experience such things, from the testimony of the word of God. The affrighted jailer soon found rest and joy. The distressed inquirers on the day of Pentecost soon began to "eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." We know this too from the testimony of believers in every age, even in our own. And though they should hold their peace in this matter, we could see the evidence with our eyes. We could often see the wicked suddenly stopped in their career of wickedness; we might see them filled with alarm for their souls, and then turning from sin, serving God, and enjoying sweet peace of conscience.

CHAPTER IV.

IMPROVEMENT OF THE SUBJECT.

SECTION I. *Several sorts of unbelievers described.*—That the reader may be induced to inquire carefully whether or not he is among any of the several sorts of unbelievers, let him bear in mind that faith and the preaching of the word are blessings unspeakably great, inasmuch as they are necessary in the plan of salvation; that the condition of the believer is unspeakably happy; and that assurance of eternal salvation is attainable. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Proper care and honesty with our own hearts would surely enable us to know whether we believe or not; whether or not we have right views and feelings in reference to Christ and his salvation. We may infer, moreover, from what was offered in the foregoing chapter, that perseverance in faith is not the condition of salvation, or foundation of our title to it. He who believes shall be saved. It is not, believe and you shall be saved, if you persevere; but, believe and you shall be saved. And as belief is salvation, so

is unbelief destruction. It is self-murder of the worst kind, of the soul. For a man to disbelieve is, like the Pharisees, to reject the counsel of God against himself.

Consider then, reader, the momentous importance of the subject; for upon it your everlasting destiny depends. Consider whether you have faith; "for all men have not faith," and without it, it is impossible to please God. Indeed, our Saviour declared that there were few saved. Consider that very many have been awfully deceived, and that you are in danger of being deceived, as well as others. The Laodiceans thought they had need of nothing, while they were poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." The ten virgins all supposed themselves wise, but five of them proved to be foolish. Consider that deception is attended with consequences awful beyond conception. Consider that it is for your own interest to make an impartial trial of yourself. Deception cannot last forever; death, if nothing else, will show us what we are prepared for. We may trust to cunningly devised fables in life, but in

death there will be no fables. Let the word of God prevail with you. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

First. All who are grossly ignorant of divine truth are to be classed among unbelievers. Believing implies a knowledge of the thing believed. We must have "an heart to know the Lord." And we must know our need of Christ. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Those who do not know that they are diseased, will not inquire for the physician. Indeed, faith is expressed by knowledge. It is a "translation out of darkness, into God's marvellous light." It is a coming to the "knowledge of the truth." Ignorance, then, is no excuse for disobedience.

Second. All the openly profane, those who live in the practice of notorious sins, are undoubtedly to be classed among unbelievers. Those who lie, swear, and steal, sometimes call themselves believers. "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well:

the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." All profane swearers may lay aside all pretensions to faith. Upon the flying roll in the vision of Zechariah, there was written a curse against swearers. False swearers, (and all profane swearing is of this kind,) together with the beams and stones of their houses, were to be consumed. And profane swearing is not limited to taking God's name in vain. We are not to swear by any profane oath; if we do, we may lay aside all pretensions to faith. "Swear not, neither by heaven, neither by earth, neither by any other oath." Taking an oath is an act of religious worship, paid to God; and hence, to take an oath, except as prescribed by law, is always to take God's holy name in vain; and hence, too, to swear by any thing but God alone, is always to put something else in the place of God; it is idolatry. Our Saviour charged the Jews with profane swearing, because they swore by their head, and by the altar, and by the temple. Those, then, who swear by faith, or by conscience, or by any other oath habitually, must be destitute of faith.

The unclean, or those who live in the practice of lewdness, are undoubtedly unbelievers. And the apostle expressly classes them with unbelievers. "Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." The works of the flesh are all works of unbelief. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest; which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred," and such like; and then the Apostle adds, "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

Drunkards must also be classed with unbelievers. Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God. And among these we may include those who waste their time in grog-shops, and among intemperate companions. "Wo unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them." Some destroy their reason by drunkenness; this is more than beastly; for the beasts are never guilty of it. Others glory in their shame. So it was of old. "Wo unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink." Others go farther still; and

not only go to ruin themselves, but carry others along with them. "Wo unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken. The cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory."

All liars are among unbelievers. All such are called children of the devil, who is "a liar, and the father of it." And "whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" are to be shut out from the "holy city, New Jerusalem." In short, among the openly profane, all of whom are unbelievers, must be reckoned all thieves, murderers, evil speakers, deceivers, and Sabbath-breakers.

Third. Those who habitually neglect secret duties, particularly prayer, are unbelievers. Prayer is the very breath of the new creature. As soon as created, it prays; and so, where there is habitual neglect of secret prayer, there is not the new creature—there is not faith.

Fourth. All who expect to be saved by the merit of their own good works are unbelievers. And what multitudes are there who have no other foundation of their hopes than this. They make their own works their Saviour; thus proving that they have not faith in the Saviour of sinners.

SECTION II. *What are no true marks of faith.*—First. A man's thinking that he has faith, and confidently affirming that he has, does not prove it to be so. Where there is the least faith, there is commonly the most self-confidence. Faith occasions a holy jealousy, of which unbelievers know nothing. It discovers to a man the deceitfulness of his heart; and this makes him distrustful, rather than self-confident. But our Lord positively says, that many who think they believe will be miserably disappointed. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Second. Some think they are believers, because they never doubted the truth of the Gospel. You say you never doubted, therefore you believe. Might we not rather say, you never had doubts, therefore you do not believe? Freedom from doubt may be nothing but your indifference. If we should hear it reported, on good authority, that a man in another quarter of the world has a vast estate, we should not be inclined to doubt it at all. But,

if we were farther told, that our maintenance depended upon our obtaining a share in that estate, and that if we would take the necessary steps, the owner would give us that share, we should not so easily credit the report. When we begin to discover our personal interest in the matter, we then begin to entertain suspicions that it may not be true. So it is with many who hear the Gospel report. They do not regard it as a thing in which they are personally concerned, and therefore do not take the trouble to dispute or doubt it. While they slumber on in carnal security, and see not their own need of Christ, they are quite sure that they believe. But when they begin to feel the convictions of an awakened and accusing conscience, and begin to see how much is depending, they find their former belief to be nothing but an easy credulity in that for which they felt no concern. When concern arises, then doubts and suspicions arise along with it. But their freedom from doubt may also arise from a "profound ignorance of the mystery of the Gospel;" or from their ignorance of God's holiness and their own sinfulness. They regard sin as a small thing, and reconciliation to God as very easy. But when awakened to some just impressions of the

awful guilt of impenitence and unbelief, as set forth in God's word, and applied to their hearts by his Holy Spirit, they often find it difficult to believe that a God of infinite holiness will ever receive and save them on any terms.

Third. Some conclude that they have faith, because they live what they call "good moral lives." This is an exceedingly common delusion. If we weigh this kind of faith in the balance of God's sanctuary, we find it wanting. Not that we are to think lightly of a "good moral life." Not to live such a life would give evidence of a want of faith. But because the profane and immoral do not believe, we must not hence conclude that all who are not profane and immoral do believe. While a man's external conduct is regular and moral, he may be plotting the blackest crimes in his heart. Pride, ambition, envy, malice, worldliness, and "covetousness, which is idolatry," may reign there. There are lusts of the mind as well as lusts of the flesh. And if we do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, we may still revel in the lusts of the mind, and thus be "the children of wrath, even as others." Indeed, the eyes of some are so dazzled with the fancied goodness of their own morality, that it becomes to them a barrier between the Saviour and their souls. O, that

this fond conceit were banished from the world ! Good morality is an indispensable part, but it is not the whole of vital religion.

Fourth. Others conclude that they have faith, because they have had convictions of sin. If peace follow these seasons of anxiety, many conclude at once that it is peace from the Holy Spirit. But because the work of faith begins in conviction of sin, it does not follow that all who have ever had convictions are savingly converted. Judas, Pilate, Simon Magus, and many others, have had pungent convictions, without faith. Indeed it is possible for men to grow worse, instead of better, by convictions of sin. Sins against light are greatly aggravated ; and he who sins under the lashes of an awakened conscience, sins against light. And sinning under such circumstances produces its effect on the heart. By their convictions some are driven from the more gross into the more secret sins, or from profaneness into morality ; where they stop, without ever arriving at faith. Some go through their whole life under the painful vicissitude of sin and conviction. Some put their convictions in the place of Christ. They think, because they have been concerned for their souls, and God's Spirit has dealt with them, that God loves them, and therefore will

save them. Others despise and quench convictions, and thus harden their hearts till they provoke the Lord to give them up to vile affections, "because that when they knew God they glorified him not as God." Others give themselves up to despair, and plunge headlong into ruin; as did Judas.

Fifth. Some conclude that they have faith, because they have some knowledge of the things of God. But because knowledge is necessary to faith, it does not follow that all are believers who have some knowledge of the letter of the Gospel. Men may have much of this kind of knowledge, without saving faith. Knowledge may be obtained without special aid from the Holy Spirit: but faith cannot. Hence it is called "the faith of the operation of God;" "the work of faith with power;" "the working of his mighty power," &c. Indeed, many who have lived in open profaneness have been eminent for some of the gifts that are of use to the edification of the Church. Judas was of this description. The devil probably has more knowledge of the mystery of the Gospel, as to the letter of it, than any man on earth: and more than this, it is said, that "the devils believe and tremble." So men may have their minds full of truth, and their hearts destitute

of saving power ; like the reptile which is said to have a precious gem in its head, but its body full of deadly poison.

Sixth. There may be delight in the Gospel without faith. For when the work of faith is wrought in the heart, it is commonly, if not always preceded by convictions of sin, which cause distress in a greater or less degree. And as this distress, so faith and these transient delights (for they are usually transient) come by the instrumentality of the word ; and if some emotions of joy follow a little awakening ; if there be but a little relish of the word : a little taste of the sweetness of heavenly things, it is immediately mistaken for faith. Faith also, like this spurious joy, produces desire to enjoy the ordinances of religion ; and hence the liability to deception from counterfeit appearances. The parable of the stony ground hearers shows that there may be a high degree of joy ; a kind of delight in approaching to God, when there is no work of grace in the heart. Christ said to the Jews of John the Baptist : “He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.” And these emotions, which so much resemble the joys of the true believer, may proceed from various causes. With some it may be the effect of

novelty. We are ever fond of something new. To persons who have had little or no instruction in religion, or to those who have thought but little on it, the things of the gospel are something new; and they are surprised at the greatness of the advantages promised to believers. This, especially till the novelty be worn off, produces delight. A person may be under distress of mind; and in this condition may be entertained with an account of the gift and benefits of a Saviour to lost sinners, and of the joys of heaven. Now, this may not only occasion a diversion from trouble, but produce great delight. We may experience worldly disappointments, and be diverted from them by the same spurious joy. Young persons particularly, in the fervour of youthful passion, are liable to be carried away with false joy, under the presentation of the glorious promises of the Gospel. Some preachers have such a fluency of language and warmth of affection, that they occasion, even in impenitent hearers, something of the feelings which glow in their own bosoms; or a sudden and agreeable surprise at an ingenious turn of expression, or the expression of a novel and striking thought, may awaken attention, and produce feelings of pleasure, which many will mistake for gracious affec-

tions. Lastly, men who have no faith may abound in external duties, and, like the Pharisees, call this righteousness ; and if, by the multiplication of religious or moral duties, or any other way, we can persuade ourselves that we are righteous, it must produce a greater or less degree of joy.

Seventh. Not every change in a man, though it be for the better, is proof of saving faith. There may be great changes without faith. There may be a great change wrought in the *mind* of a man without faith. Man is by nature blind ; sin has put out the eyes of the soul. Hence an unregenerate state is called darkness, a regenerate state light. But without this light, men may acquire much knowledge of divine truth. Thus the apostle speaks of those "who were once enlightened, and had tasted the good word of God ;" but who might finally be lost. Judas and Balaam had so much light as to be able to instruct others, and yet they never had saving faith. There may be a great change wrought in the *conscience* without faith. There may be carnal security, then pungent convictions, or awakenings, and then a kind of peace, and yet no faith. There may be a great change wrought in the *affections* without saving faith. There may be sorrow

for sin, fear of wrath, and flashes of joy, without true faith. The *will* may be changed without saving faith. How many faithless ones have been ready to say as the children of Israel said to Moses: "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it and do it." There may be very great changes in the *conduct*, where there is no faith. The vicious may become moral; the drunkard may become a sober man; and the externally honest and moral man be turned into a professor of religion. There are those who have once "escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ," and have become "again entangled therein and overcome;" thus showing that they never had saving faith; "the latter end is worse with them than the beginning."

Eighth. And, finally, a man may have some sort of faith, without saving faith. There is one form of this faith, which, for the sake of distinction, we may call *cradle-faith*, or a faith which men bring with them from their childhood. As far back as they can remember, they always believed. But this faith is not "the faith of the operation of God;" it is a

weed that grows of its own accord. It grows, too, in a bad soil, in corrupt, unsanctified nature. Nor is it kept alive by showers of heavenly grace, like saving faith. It overlooks the Mediator, and flees to a false refuge. This is proved by its fruit. Saving faith brings forth the fruit of holiness, this does not. There is another kind of faith, which we may call *rational faith*. It goes one step beyond the former. That is merely the effect of custom and education; but this is the assent of the mind, that the Bible is true; an assent which is given after examination of the evidences of a divine revelation. Persons who have this kind of faith, pretend to be very candid and liberal. They think it highly unreasonable not to be cautious in examining the grounds of their religious belief. Upon examining the evidences of Christianity, they find them conclusive; and hence they are led to give a general assent to the Scriptures, and this is the substance and end of their faith. This kind of faith is as common among the learned, as the former is among the ignorant. Another kind of faith, which is not saving, may be called *temporary faith*. Such was the faith of the stony ground hearers. It has a transient effect upon the soul; for they

heard the word with joy. But it is not a work of grace in the heart; and hence it continues but a short time.

SECTION III. *Some of the marks of saving faith.*—It will of course be admitted on all hands, that the Christian graces are exercised in different degrees by different persons, and in different degrees by the same person at different times. It is here taken for granted, that there are marks, or evidences, by which saving faith may be known. “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” Indeed much of the Bible is designed to assist persons in forming a judgment of their own character and state; so that if some do not know whether they believe or not, it is not because the Scriptures do not give the marks by which faith may be known.

I. One who has saving faith heartily embraces and approves the Scripture method of saving sinners by the mediation of Jesus Christ, and, renouncing all other ways, relies on this alone for salvation. This will be clear if we consider,

First. What the way of salvation proposed in the Gospel is. The Gospel presupposes

that man by sin has become "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;" that is, that man, in and of himself, can do nothing to obtain salvation; that he is blind, and knows not how to take one step towards happiness; and that he has nothing to secure him from deserved wrath. He has become, as it were, bankrupt; he has nothing to pay the immense debt he has contracted by sin. Now, in this sinful, weak, and blind condition of man, the Gospel proposes a remedy for his disease, a supply for all his wants. He is wretched, and the Gospel promises him the true honour; he is miserable, and it offers everlasting happiness; he is poor, and it holds out to him the best of all riches; he is blind, and it comes with eye-salve to give him sight; he is naked, and it provides him with the spotless garments of a Saviour's righteousness. Every thing which man, as a sinner, needs is supplied in Jesus Christ, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." In him the sinner may find "durable riches and righteousness." As he says to the Laodiceans, so he says to all: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be

rich ; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." And there is not only the supply itself, but there is also provision for putting the sinner in possession of it, in such a way as to promote the believer's highest happiness, and at the same time both to honour God and his holy law, and exalt his free grace. If we have faith, we shall see the truth of all this ; and seeing we must approve and choose it.

Second. Consider also the nature of the approbation which faith gives to the Gospel. Approbation always implies knowledge. Before we approve of the Gospel plan of salvation, we must see it in a supernatural light. It will never be approved when viewed with a carnal eye ; to the carnal eye of one, it is a stumbling-block ; to that of another, foolishness. God must "command the light to shine out of darkness, and shine in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The heart of one who has faith will also be satisfied with God's design to save his own people, to save them in such a way that they can have no share in the glory of their salvation, and to have all the

glory ascribed to his own blessed name. Nothing but a work of grace in the heart can make a man stoop so low as that the Lord above shall be exalted. This approbation, moreover, includes the satisfaction of the heart with all the means of divine appointment for accomplishing the divine purposes. And, lastly, faith adheres with entire satisfaction to the Gospel plan of salvation, preferring it above all other ways; and this last is the act of faith which gives a sure title to all the benefits of Christ.

Third. Consider, too, the manner in which faith approves of the plan of salvation. Faith views it as a plan worthy of infinite wisdom. While justice seems to demand the sinner's death, mercy demands his life; but in Christ, justice and mercy are both fully satisfied, the sinner is saved, and the honour of God and his law fully maintained. Faith views this plan as full of love and goodness. "God is love;" and in no way is this love so signally manifested as in the death of Christ for the salvation of sinners. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." "But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Faith views this plan as

highly honourable to all parts of the divine law. The obedience of Christ to it was the highest honour it could receive; and it was a glorious testimony of the authority of God, of his wisdom, goodness, and purity in framing the law. And if Christ honoured the law by the obedience of his life, no less did he honour its sanction by enduring its penalty. Faith also views this plan as full of peace. The Gospel is a mission of peace, and so faith regards it. The law has nothing to demand. If it require perfect obedience, then Christ has fulfilled all righteousness, and so is become the end of the law for righteousness for every one who believes. If it demand the penalty, Christ has been obedient unto death; and in raising him from the dead, God declared his satisfaction with the work of his Son. And when God justifies, conscience is satisfied, and the soul finds peace. Lastly, faith views this plan as affording complete security to sinners. It was devised by infinite wisdom, it has the promise of him whose word is eternal truth, that salvation is sure to the penitent and believing soul, and almighty power is pledged to carry the plan into execution. Hence there is security.

Fourth. Faith will discover its approbation

of this plan, even in the midst of temptation. In every difficulty the believing soul flees to the Saviour. The burden of guilt, the perplexities of temptation, the fears of death and judgment, are all relieved in the plan of salvation. And if temptation at any time produce self-reliance, or any false reliance, the soul soon discovers the mistake, and, dissatisfied with itself, finds its only satisfaction in Jesus Christ. In conformity to the Gospel is heart-felt delight. There is a refreshing sweetness in it, which is known only to the believing soul. And if the believer be harassed at all with doubts and fears, they are not about the sufficiency of the way, but whether he be really in that way.

II. A second mark of saving faith is, that wherever it exists, it manifests itself by approving the whole law of God, as holy, just, spiritual, and good. An unbeliever may approve of some of the commands of God. Any one may approve of such precepts as are not aimed at his own besetting sins. But faith alone can say that none of the commands are grievous. The spiritual mind can "delight in the law of God;" but "the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The spiritual mind contemplates with delight that inward

change which produces a desire of conformity to the whole of the divine law. The believer is born again, of water and of the Spirit; he is "created in Christ Jesus unto good works." And if every believer be not sure that he has been created anew in Christ, yet he must be in some measure conscious of it, or he can have no evidence of saving faith.

First. The believer manifests his approbation of the divine law by cherishing the desire to be conformed to it. By regeneration we are made "partakers of the divine nature;" and the effect of this new nature will be, in a greater or less degree, to produce inclinations to obedience; and the inclination itself will be pleasant to the soul; hence it will be cherished. The effect of obedience is always pleasant to the believer. "Great peace have all they that love thy law."

Second. The believer discovers approbation of the law of God, by his delight in seeing others conformed to it. He is pleased with holiness, wherever it is found. If he cannot see himself conformed to the divine law as he could wish, he is pleased with seeing others so; and looks upon them as the excellent of the earth.

Third. The believer never entertains dislike to God's law, when he is under the greatest

temptations to do it. He will be displeased with himself, but not with the law. He will not dislike the law, though he should have occasion to say, with Paul, "the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death; for sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." With Paul, the believer can still add, "wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good." The believer's language is, Whatever becomes of me, the law is good; I do not wish one item of it changed.

Fourth. The believer shows his approbation of the whole revealed will of God concerning the holiness required of man, by dissatisfaction with want of full conformity to it. His prayer is: "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes." However strong his assurance of an interest in Christ, he is not satisfied with any want of conformity to the law of God. It is the likeness of the Saviour which satisfies; "I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness." Now, unless you can thus approve of the whole revelation of the will of God concerning duty, you have not saving faith.

III. A third mark of saving faith is, that Christ appears precious to the soul: "Unto

you therefore which believe, he is precious." Faith exalts Christ, and places him on the throne of the mind and affections. Now, reader, how is it with you? Is Christ precious to you? Do you wish him to be precious to others? Parents, children, husbands, wives, do you endeavour to commend Christ to one another? Do you prize the means of grace which Christ has appointed? Can ordinances satisfy you without a discovery of Christ in them by faith? Can you go from the house of God as great strangers to Christ as you entered it, and be satisfied with yourself? Do you resolutely and willingly part with every thing which comes in competition with Christ? When brought into such a condition as to be compelled to offend Christ or the world, which would you do? Can other things satisfy you without Christ? Is Christ more precious to you than every thing else? If not, he is not precious to you; he is not yours; you have not saving faith.

Other marks of faith might be given, but I omit them, and ask three questions, which I wish the reader to lay seriously to heart. Let conscience give the answer, as in presence of the Searcher of all hearts.

First. Are you satisfied with Christ Jesus

himself? Do you see any loveliness in his person, or is he to you void of form or comeliness?

Second. Do you renounce your own wisdom, righteousness, and strength, and venture your all upon the wisdom, righteousness, and strength of Christ?

Third. Is it your pleasure to take the yoke of Christ upon you? Do you think his yoke easy and his burden light?

Answer these questions in the light of eternity. The day is coming when the secrets of all hearts will be laid open; and surely it is the part of wisdom to know your case before it shall be too late to apply the offered remedy. Many have thought themselves believers, and have afterwards found their mistake. "Do not think, then, that you have not need "to try yourselves," and "prove your own selves," and to "give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." How awful will be your mistake, if you do not find it till your final doom be fixed in the world of wo.

SECTION IV. *Address to unbelievers.*—To unbelievers belong all the openly vicious, all profane swearers, all drunkards, liars, all the unclean, all whoremongers, fornicators, adul-

terers, Sabbath-breakers, all grossly ignorant and self-righteous sinners, all habitual neglecters of duties, secret, private, or public ; and, in short, all who do not approve of God's plan of saving sinners, all who do not approve of the whole law of God, and all to whom Christ is not precious. I entreat such to listen to a few things, on their *sin*, their *danger*, and their *duty*.

First. I begin with the *sin* of the unbeliever. I shall notice only a few of the ingredients of the sin of unbelief. Murder, incest, theft, adultery, and other similar crimes, we view with abhorrence ; he who is guilty of them we regard as a monster of iniquity. But unbelief goes a step farther than these crimes ; or rather, we might call it the prolific fountain of all sin. It is trampling on the authority of God in that command, which is given with peculiar emphasis, as the first and indispensable command of the Gospel, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is his commandment, "that we should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ." But unbelief treats this command with contempt. Unbelief also charges God with falsehood. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself ; he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, be-

cause he believeth not the record which God gave of his Son." Surely unbelief cannot be a small thing. Unbelief imputes folly to the only wise God, and that in the most signal instance of his wisdom. All the treasures of infinite wisdom, of which we have ever had any exhibition, are employed in the plan of salvation. Here is manifold wisdom—wisdom in a mystery, into which the angels desire to look. But unbelief rejects it all, thus treating the riches of redeeming love as a trifle, not worthy to be attended to, or even believed. Unbelief goes farther than this; it charges God with a defect in goodness, and tramples on his love, mercy, and grace. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious," is the aspect under which the Lord appears in the Gospel. The Gospel is the glass in which the goodness of God is most strikingly seen; but unbelief would dash that glass in pieces, and thus obliterate the name by which the Lord most delights to be known. Like faithful Abraham, the believer gives all glory to God; the unbeliever takes it all away. Unbelievers, who hear the Gospel, "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." The unbeliever "hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the cove-

nant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace."

Second. Now, reader, if you are an unbeliever, you are in *danger* of damnation. You sit secure, as if you had nothing to fear; you cry peace, when there is no peace. You say to your soul, Soul, take thy rest, when you are hastening on to ruin. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." And your great hazard in being exposed to this fearful doom is, that of the wrath of God. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Who knows the power of God's wrath? who can endure it? We greatly fear the wrath of *man* when unrestrained; but think of the wrath of an offended God; when the Lord Jesus shall be "revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Here you are told of everlasting destruction, of which you are in danger; not the annihilation of the body or the soul, for these must exist forever, "their

worm dieth not ;” but the utter and everlasting destruction of all your enjoyments, and all your hopes ; the fearful doom of endless pain. It is a punishment proportioned to the crime ; and proportioned to that blood which is trampled on. It is great in proportion to the means enjoyed, by which, had you improved them, you might have been prepared for an inheritance among the sons of glory. It is great in proportion to the immeasurable worth of that salvation which, for a trifle, you would barter away. “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ?” “He that despised Moses’ law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses ; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God ?” Such is the danger of unbelief. God threatens unbelievers with wrath and punishment. On others he has impartially executed his threatenings ; as upon the Israelites, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness for their unbelief. “To whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not ?” “If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins ; but a fearful looking

for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.”

Third. Your *duty* is, to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” The bearer of such a message comes not in his own name to treat with you on this subject; but as an ambassador of Christ, furnished with a commission from him. You are required to feel and acknowledge yourself a blind and ignorant sinner, incapable in yourself of attaining to any measure of the saving knowledge of God. You are required to believe in, rely on, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ, for instruction and wisdom in all things pertaining to godliness. “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.” This wisdom is gained only by trusting entirely in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is made of God wisdom to all that believe. Renouncing all self-dependence, and all merit of your own, you must be found in Christ, “not having your own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God, through the faith of Jesus Christ.” As you have by your sins rendered yourself justly obnoxious to the wrath of your holy Maker, you are never to offer him your own doings or sufferings, as a satisfaction to him for your sins, or as a propi-

tiatory offering to turn away his wrath; but you are to trust only to the Lamb of God, that is set forth as the only propitiation for sin. Through faith, and faith alone in Christ and him crucified, will God accept sinners. You are cheerfully to receive Christ as your sovereign Lord, and willingly submit to all his commands. You are to receive him as "the author and finisher of your faith;" the author, preserver, and promoter of spiritual life, and of sanctification; for he is "made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." You are to look to him to strengthen and guide you. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." And to sum up all, you are to yield immediate compliance with these demands of your Lord and Redeemer. We have no instruction to give the least encouragement to delay. Now is the accepted time; to-morrow may be too late. We are to comply with all our Lord's commands, for they cannot be separated. Time is precious, waste it not in delay.

We beseech you, turn to the Lord and live. "As ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." It is no un-

reasonable demand upon you to believe on Christ. Believe, and great will be your reward in heaven. "Whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Accept of Christ, for he is worthy. He is "the only begotten of the Father;" "the image of the invisible God." Both for his personal excellence, and on account of what he has done for sinners, he deserves the obedience and supreme love of your heart. All the perfections of the divine nature, all that is excellent in your own, all the wounds of the crucified Saviour of the world, all the tears he shed, all the crimson drops of Gethsemane, and the flowing blood of Calvary, all cry with one voice, Sinners, we beseech you, believe on the Lord Jesus. Can you refuse? All the love of the Father, all the grace of the Son, and all the blessings of communion with the Holy Spirit, plead with you to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus. It is heaven which you are entreated to gain; it is hell which you are urged to avoid.

SECTION V. *Address to those who are in doubt whether they believe or not.*—Your case is truly pitiable. A conflict between hope and

fear continually torments you. Rest not in this state. "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." The authority of God, the claims of the Gospel, your own comfort, all call upon you to hasten out of this state of painful doubt. I will not flatter you with the belief that you will find no difficulty in it; it is often a work of difficulty. There must be searching, proving, trying. The candle of the Lord must be lighted in you, and with that you must search. The touchstone must be brought, and you must stand the test. The furnace must be kindled, and you must abide the trial. You must put yourself in the balance, which is held by the hand of him who weighs every action.

First. Do not, however, conclude that you are destitute of faith, because you have never experienced all which some others relate of themselves. Some, before conversion, have long and severe conflicts with sin, or about the law; some have much clearness and confidence when first converted, so that they are able to give a distinct account of the time, place, means, and manner of their conversion; and some have much joy and eminent manifestations afterwards; others have not. If you

come short of some others in these respects, do not from this conclude that you have no faith. What is absolutely necessary, is only such exercises as are sufficient to drive you from yourself to Christ. In some, these exercises are very long and intense. Others, in the mist of their own corruptions, and the temptations of Satan and the world, cannot discover the divine work upon their souls; they cannot reach that joy in believing which some experience; they are never permitted to see Christ upon the mount in high manifestations of his glory.

Second. Do not conclude that you have no faith, because you see not all things as they ought to be with you. Sin sometimes rages and tyrannizes in the heart even of a believer; and though it be a blot upon the Christian character, it does not of itself prove an entire destitution of faith, at least where the man mourns over it, and strives against it.

Third. You will remove many difficulties by studying well the covenant of grace. Ascertain the ground of your acceptance with God, and your admittance into a covenant relation. Whatever your sins, you cannot be ruined, if you are willing to owe salvation en-

tirely to free grace in Christ according to the Gospel. The greatest sinner may be saved in this way.

Fourth. Study the adaptation of the covenant of grace to the state of believers, who still carry about with them a body of sin and death. It accepts of sincere obedience; it provides influences to enable believers to perform that obedience; and secures pardon for the failings of those who honestly and heartily endeavour to live a life of faith and godliness.

Fifth. Study the source of that peace which believers enjoy in their walk with God. This is not their own merit, but God's mercy. It is not their own blamelessness, but the efficacy of Christ's blood to take away sin; it is not freedom from occasional irregularities, though these are inexcusable; it is the testimony of a good conscience, that we make it our constant endeavour to keep that conscience void of offence towards God and towards man, by entire dependence on God in Christ, for mercy to forgive sin, and for grace to help in time of need.

Sixth. Especially acquaint yourself with those marks of grace which are to be found in the believing soul under all its temptations; and which indicate the existence rather than the

degree of grace. These marks have before been mentioned.

Seventh. Pray fervently for the influences of the Spirit, which searcheth the deep things of God, and which can send such a beam of light into your soul as fully to show you your state.

Eighth. Wait upon the Lord in the use of all the means of grace. In matters of Christian assurance God exercises much sovereignty. "When he giveth quietness, who can give trouble? and when he hideth his face, who can behold him?" Trust in him, that in his own good time he will grant your requests. "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." Impatience, frowardness, sloth, and weariness, are not indications of a good state of the soul. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

SECTION VI. *Address to those who have good reason to say that they believe.*—If you have indeed good evidence of faith, "Take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." Bless his holy name. Praise him

who remembered you in your low estate, for his mercy endureth forever. You are by faith engrafted into Christ; then bring forth much fruit. Depend on Christ for strength and light, that he may be all in all to you. Above all things regard his honour and glory. Pity those who are without God, and without hope in the world. Labour for their salvation. Commend Christ and his religion to them by your holy walk and godly conversation. Sympathize with God's people in all their joys and sorrows, that you may appear to be members of the same body, of which Christ is the glorious and exalted Prince and head. Whatever God has done for you, ascribe all the glory of it to him alone. Dearly beloved in the Lord, since we "look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," from heaven, "who shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself," stand fast in the Lord. Prepare for trials. If never called to meet them, rejoice in the deliverance; but if you are, think it not strange, think not that God is against you. They that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must travel through difficulties. "In the world ye shall

have tribulation." The glorified saints are a people who have come out of great tribulation, and have had their garments washed white in the blood of the Lamb. Stand fast in the love and obedience of the truth; and he who is able shall "present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." To him be glory in all the churches. Amen.

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